

THE REBUILDING OF LONDON  
AFTER THE GREAT FIRE

Acc. No.	17227
Class No.	G.28.
Book No.	365

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THE  
REBUILDING  
OF LONDON  
AFTER THE GREAT FIRE

17227

by

1372

T. F. REDDAWAY

M.A., F.R.HIST.S.



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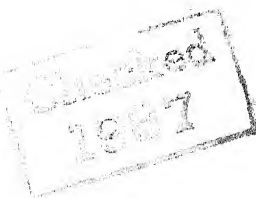
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*From the records of the Corporation of London*

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No. 25, The Fishmongers' Company.

No. 27, Mr. Hanslip Fletcher and Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons Ltd.

No. 32, The London and Middlesex Archaeological Society.



## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOOTNOTES

<i>C.L.C. Journal</i>	Journals of the City Lands Committee.
<i>C.L.M.</i>	Old Minutes (1668-73) of the City Lands Committee.
<i>C.L.O.</i>	Orders of the City Lands Committee, 1667-71. For later volumes the years of the volume are added.
<i>C.L.P.</i>	Papers of the City Lands Committee.
<i>Cal. S.P. Dom.</i>	Calendar of State Papers Domestic at the Public Record Office.
<i>Cal. Treas. Bks.</i>	Calendar of Treasury Books at the Public Record Office.
<i>Guildhall Lib.</i>	Library of the Corporation of the City of London.
<i>Guildhall Recs.</i>	Records of the Corporation of the City of London in the Town Clerk's department.
<i>Jor.</i>	Journal of the Court of Common Council of the City of London.
<i>P.C.Reg.</i>	Register of the Privy Council at the Public Record Office.
<i>P.R.O.</i>	Public Record Office.
<i>Repert.</i>	Repertory of the Court of Aldermen of the City of London.

## P R E F A C E

EVERY schoolchild in England learns the date of the 'Great Fire of London': few know more of its story. The tragedy of that easily pictured destruction has been too vivid for forgetfulness. The slow labour of reconstruction is seldom mentioned. Yet the evacuation and plight of the refugees, the resources upon which they drew to repair the disaster, and the courage with which they did it, must always hold attention. Catastrophe and reconstruction never age. The Japanese, after the destruction of Tokyo in 1923, sent to know how London had met her calamity, and these words, written in July 1939, have had for their background the same melancholy series of measures for evacuation of children and care of refugees.

The story of the rebuilding is hard to disentangle. Something is known about the churches, and on them, a subject in themselves, I have scarcely touched. The secular and greater work is almost unknown. With no dominant figure to draw the eye, no chronicler to tell of the efforts of the dispossessed, it has been overlaid and forgotten. The city government left voluminous records, but the mazes of its committees have many centres and no single clue. The minutes show none of the voting, the discussion or the controversy. Theirs is the blank flow of decisions made, not the vital play of decisions in the making. Nothing lies ready made to supply their deficiency. The diaries and papers of private citizens have seldom survived. Pepys is valuable, but ends too soon. Evelyn, a man of taste, keenly interested in the beauty of London, the author of plans for its rebuilding, is of little help. The court of the Restoration had few contacts with the city, and his comments die with the death of his plans. Wren's draft is worse. Seen in isolation, and not as an incident in the course of events, it has bred the story of a

## P R E F A C E

great and neglected opportunity. The documents tell a different tale. In them he acquires the credit for a new work, the Fleet Canal, but ceases to be the rejected creator of a miraculous new city. They show no hero, no presiding genius. The focal point is the struggle of the community to survive destruction. Their mass, often unindexed, seldom calendared, sometimes unsorted, gradually yields a picture of difficulties faced and surmounted. In spite of mistakes and misconceptions, the splendour of the community's achievement is their only final conclusion.

Two explanations and one apology must be made. Dates have always been given in the modern style, with the year changing on January 1st. In quotations from all except printed sources, 'ye' has been changed to 'the'. The apology is for references. If these sometimes give the folio for the beginning of a meeting instead of that for a particular decision, or record, for example, f.155 instead of f.155v, I hope to be excused. A series of particularly crabbed manuscripts so damaged my sight that reading had to be abandoned for some months, and time has prevented the subsequent checking of references used only in part.

The work has been done under the terms of an Esher Research Studentship awarded by the Trustees of the London Museum. In its course I have become indebted, for unfailing interest and kindness, to the rectors of city churches too numerous for individual record, and to all those who have made visits to the Records Department and the Library at the Guildhall such an abiding pleasure. Clare College, by its hospitality at a critical moment, has eased my task, and Dr. J. H. Clapham has generously found time to read my manuscript. Miss E. Jeffries Davis has been, throughout, an unfailing source of guidance. Her careful and acute criticism, her wise suggestions, and her friendship have been to the writer, as to all students of London history, an inexhaustible reservoir of strength. To her and to my father I owe the deepest gratitude.

*This Book  
is dedicated to my*

*MOTHER*

*who asks for so little  
and gives so much*

## INTRODUCTION

SINCE this book appeared, London has been repeatedly bombed. Much damage has been done and in considerable though scattered areas every building is now demolished. Rebuilding, forbidden in most cases until the war ends, has been for that reason the more widely discussed. Inevitably, references to the rebuilding after the Great Fire have been freely made. Lessons have been sought and comparisons drawn. The lessons exist, but only if the differences are mastered. This introduction may chart the most important: it can do no more.<sup>1</sup>

Now, as in 1666, though the scope has changed, the question of replanning is the most controversial. Londoners in 1666, confronted with the effects of disaster before that disaster had been either assessed or explained, were forced to plan in a hurry, with little knowledge and no administrative machinery ready made. Their problem was local, bounded by reconstruction, aiming at social and economic restoration. We face a different problem — national, perhaps international. Though it may alter with every month of war there has been time for preparation. Royal commissions have surveyed the scope and aims of replanning. A Minister of Town and Country Planning exists. Public bodies and private people have put forward their schemes. Pooled knowledge, backed by national resources, supported by effective authority, can be directed with some certainty to any agreed end. The Barlow, the Scott and the Uthwatt reports have advocated and the government have accepted the idea of a national planning authority. There is general agreement that its aims shall be the redevelopment of congested urban areas, the decentralization or dispersal of industries, the encouragement of a reasonable balance of industrial development throughout the kingdom, and the revitalization of rural communities. Profiteering in land values has been condemned and the freezing of local building and development pending a start on planned reconstruction has been accepted by Parliament and by the public. These principles turn London's problem into a part of that of the country as a whole. They make possible a reduction in her size and the removal of some of her industries. For the first time in her history her development may be checked in the interests of the rest of the kingdom.

Given this radical difference, we can learn with confidence from 1666. Some of the lessons are plain. Those in the field of administration are

<sup>1</sup> Paper rationing severely limits this preface. Detailed discussion of problems is impossible. I should like to write at length on much that I have not even been able to touch upon. If any person or body feels that its proposals should have been included I must plead that I agree.

## INTRODUCTION

positive, the rest mainly negative. Plans must be made public with the minimum of delay. Reconstruction can be guided though perhaps not compelled. Every facility should be given for disputes to be settled swiftly and cheaply. The barriers imposed by complicated interests in property must be lifted. There must be freedom for those anxious and able to build. Whether that building be of factories or houses or public utilities, there should be means to allow the impotent to be equitably compensated and quickly dispossessed. So far as the public is concerned, the authorities and departments in control should be few, speak with one voice, and be accessible. 1666 teaches all these as essentials.

In other problems the scene has changed too much for constructive deduction. Control of design and building materials worked well in 1666. Improvement of traffic routes was not unsuccessful. Needs are now more complicated. There should be scope for standardized materials and, in private houses and some factories, standardized designs. Both are in the logic of recent development and may be expected, but whether the Royal Academy's bold draughts will be realized is for the future to decide. The difficulties in acquiring land for improvements and in the assessment of betterment are well known. Royal Commissions have recommended, but controversy remains and 1666, from its humbler scale, can give no sure guide. Finance is no longer the problem it was in 1666, but the then failure to deal constructively with the boundaries of areas of administration might well be heeded now.

One last lesson 1666 can teach. If full replanning is impossible, much can still be gained. Better siting of public buildings and markets, re-grouping of industries and housed areas, provision of open spaces — these are lordly improvements. New street-lighting, better placing of electric cables, gas pipes and sewers would be valuable gains. New road-surfaces, parking places, pull-ins at bus stops, sub-ways, fly-overs, re-sited railway stations, some or all of Sir Charles Bressey's proposals — these are necessities. They might not come at once, but whatever the outcome of national planning they could be achieved if London and its authorities agreed.

1666 is not an oracle. Its lessons are chiefly those of preparation, speed and simplification. The circumstances are too different for close analogies in matters of fact. In one thing only can it speak without reservation. Human nature has changed little. An up-to-date counterpart of the Fire Court is essential.

Cambridge, February 1943.

## CHAPTER I

# THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

‘That ruinous heap . . . that *Chaos* which we now call London’

SAMUEL ROLLE

### § I

‘WITH the pen alone it is hardly possible to set down an adequate account of the pitiful state of things brought about by the most destructive fire England has ever seen.’<sup>1</sup> The writer, a German then resident in London, was aghast before a catastrophe which, between the second and the sixth of September 1666, had engulfed wellnigh the whole of that city. Those present turned instinctively to scripture for comparisons. ‘There never has been such a fire since the destruction of Jerusalem, nor will be till the last conflagration,’ wrote one man, ‘you would have thought for five days that it had been Doomsday.’ The news spread quickly. The provinces were at first bewildered, fearing they knew not what, whilst, abroad, enemies were encouraged and all saw that the hand of God had been laid upon the city. Louis XIV, at war with England, recognized a stroke of the greatest good fortune for his cause, but prohibited rejoicings, it ‘being such a deplorable accident involving injury to so many unhappy people’, and offered to send food and all else needed for relief. The Dutch had no such compassion, but represented the Fire as punishment from Heaven and industriously spread the news that England was ruined. Venice heard from its ambassador in Paris that the losses would ‘constrain the English to abandon their high pretensions and to humble themselves before . . . the King

<sup>1</sup> This account of the Fire is based on the *Calendars of State Papers, Venetian and Domestic*, the diaries of Evelyn and Pepys, the *London Gazette*, and Mr. W. G. Bell’s admirable description in *The Great Fire of London* (1920). These are all well indexed, and, owing to demands on space, individual references have therefore been omitted.

## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

here'. In Madrid the English representative was at pains to minimize the loss, and a second dispatch from Paris suggested that 'a proud and barbarous nation reduced to despair leaves some reason for apprehension that some of them may resolve to come forth out of the country in great numbers and provide additional travail and peril for their enemies'. In London there was no such despair. The burnt-out citizens reacted savagely, seeking for culprits, believing any tale against French or Dutch or Papists. Instead of the reported clamour for peace they shouted for war to the last limit of their strength, and faced the task of rebuilding with an energy and an optimism that impressed all who beheld it.

The cause of all this trouble had begun insignificantly in the small hours of the morning at a baker's house in Pudding Lane. On September 1st London, still deserted by the well-to-do and empty after the Plague, had retired to bed as usual. The baker, as he afterwards deposed on oath, had drawn his fire and retired like the rest. Three hours later he was scrambling for his life along the gutters, while flames licked up the woodwork of his staircase. Even so, it was a full hour before the fire spread to the neighbouring houses, and the Lord Mayor, summoned shortly after, saw no reason to distinguish it from the dozens of minor fires with which London was yearly cursed. Pepys thought the same. Fetched from his sleep by a maid-servant working late, he looked and returned to bed. As he sadly noted later, 'being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off'. These judgments ought to have been right, but fate was against the city. A strong east wind carried sparks from the burning timbers across the narrow lane on to hay piled in the yard of an inn opposite. The inn caught, and from there the flames quickly spread into Thames Street, then, as now, a street famed for its wharfingers. Stores of combustibles — tallow, oil and spirits — were kept in its cellars, whilst hay, timber, and coal were stacked on the open wharves near by. The fire leapt to life. From a minor incident it became a serious danger. A burst of flame from the high



## THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

tower of St. Magnus announced to early morning passengers on London Bridge that a fire was out of hand.

A major fire in a town of narrow streets and timbered houses was a danger beyond modern conception. Buckets and cumbersome hand-squirts, the only means of applying water, were far less effective than the long fire-hooks still occasionally to be seen in country churches. Attached to the ends of ropes or poles, they were lodged in the roof trees and hauled upon until the wooden framework of the house collapsed and the flames could be beaten out or smothered. Had this been done at once, all would have been well, but the Lord Mayor hesitated. The cost might be great, he had not the consent of the owners, and he feared claims for payment for the houses destroyed. No prophet to foresee that an ordinary fire in a by-lane would spread till whole streets had been consumed, he hesitated until too late, and the damage was done. Pepys, who had taken boat to watch the show, found a lamentable confusion, 'everybody endeavouring to remove their goods . . . poor people staying in their houses . . . till the very fire touched them . . . and nobody, to my sight, endeavouring to quench it'. He watched for an hour, also making no attempt to quench it, while the flames drove fiercely westwards before the wind. Then he went on, up river, to Whitehall, where his story reached the King. Summoned, he gave the obvious advice that only by demolition could the flames be stayed. The King, much troubled, sent him in haste to command the Lord Mayor to 'spare no houses, but to pull down before the fire every way', the Duke of York promising to send all the soldiers required to help. The Lord Mayor, when found, was tired and distraught. He was already causing houses to be pulled down, but a hot, dry summer had turned the timbers into tinder, and he could not rally enough men to clear lanes sufficient to stop the driven sparks. In the afternoon, the King and the Duke of York, coming down by barge to the city, could do no more. The river was full of boats piled high with goods, the streets with carts struggling heavy laden towards safety.

## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

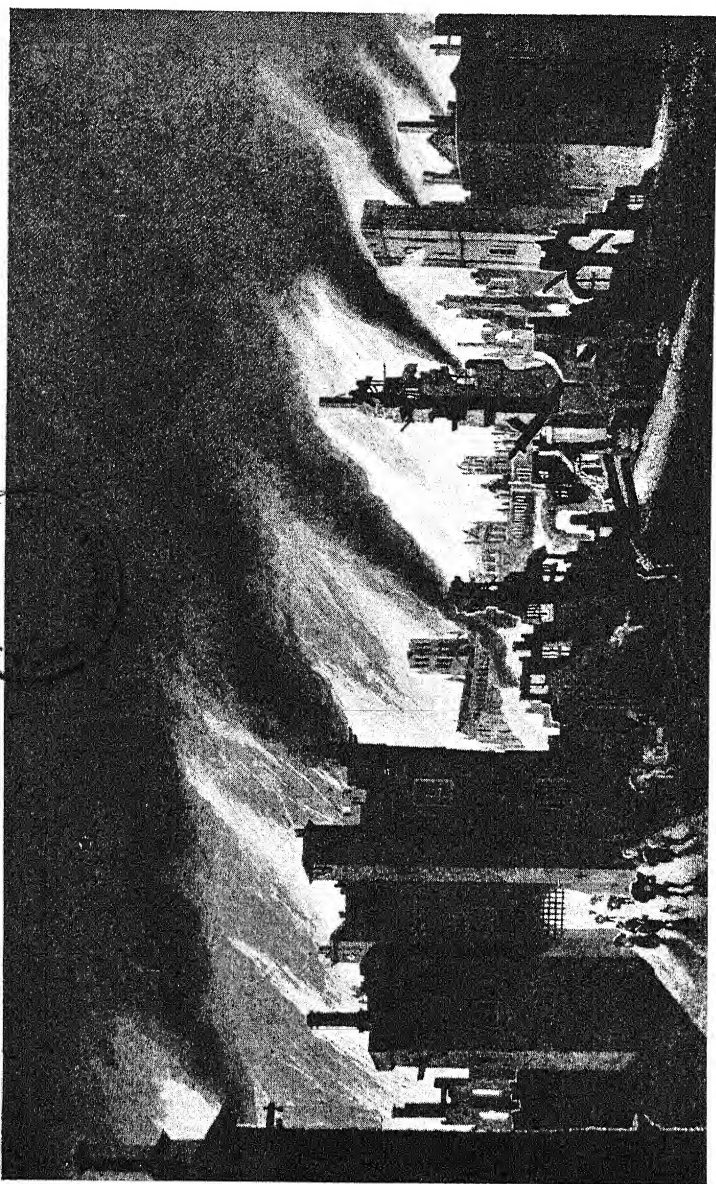
The smoke, and rumours flying faster than the smoke, had roused all London to the danger.

For the next three days there was pandemonium. Pepys, for whom a friend had sent a cart, rode away in his nightgown at four in the morning guarding the most precious of his possessions. Others, less fortunate, walked—men, women and children—laden with goods. With so much of the river front on fire, escape for the majority lay only via the narrow gates in the walls. There the crowds swayed and fought, carts and terrified horses adding to the confusion. For a time all discipline broke down, yet some stuck to their tasks. An alderman, his name unknown, rallied the people by Leadenhall and, with encouragement and a hatful of money, checked the fire at that point. John Dolben, ex-soldier, Dean of Westminster and Bishop of Rochester, marched the Westminster boys across the city to St. Dunstan's in the East, where their efforts kept the church from total destruction. If all had followed these examples the flames might have been stayed, but most strove only for themselves, while the 'bellowing wind' drove the flames forward and their noise was like to a thousand iron chariots beating together upon the stones.

If the citizens had been left to their fate, all London might have been burnt. Fortunately Charles rose to the occasion. On Sunday, the first day, he had offered help but had left the City<sup>1</sup> in control of its own affairs. On Monday, seeing that it had lost control, he put the Duke of York in supreme command, with members of the Privy Council under him. Stations were established in an arc round the fire, each controlled by a councillor or noble, assisted by three justices of the peace, thirty foot soldiers, the parish constables and a hundred men. The Lords Lieutenant of the Home Counties

<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid repetition of the clumsy 'Court of Aldermen', 'Court of Common Council' and 'City Authorities' this word, spelt with a capital, has been used to denote the government of the city, its officers and representatives. Where it is spelt with a small 'c' it has its usual meaning. Exception has had to be made in the case of quotations. Where these leave any doubt an explanation has been added. 'Corporation', the term used to-day, would be an anachronism if applied to the seventeenth century.

STATE LIBRARY



Ludgate in the Great Fire. St. Paul's lies behind it; the tower of St. Mary le Bow in the background

From a painting believed to be contemporary

## THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

were ordered to send the militia, workmen, tools for pulling down houses, and provisions for the relief of the citizens. Such measures necessarily took time, and in the interval the flames continued to spread. By Monday night the Royal Exchange was destroyed, Cheapside attacked, and Thames Street burnt from east of Billingsgate to Puddle Dock. Tuesday, the worst day of all, added St. Paul's, the Guildhall and Christ Church, Newgate, before the flames swept over the hovels in the Fleet valley to attack Fleet Street and threaten the Temple. On that day, however, the counter-measures began to take effect. Charles himself rode unguarded amongst the crowds, dismounting to handle the buckets like any labourer. With the Duke of York he spent the whole day in the city, encouraging others by his example and enforcing with his authority orders that would otherwise have gone unheeded. Time and again the flames leapt the hastily-prepared fire-lanes, destroying in a moment the work of hours, but the brothers had brought heart to the resistance, now stiffening with the coming of help from outside. Most important of all, the advice of the seamen brought up from the dockyards was at last accepted. They urged that whole streets should be laid flat with gunpowder, and the flames presented with a gap no spark could cross. Earlier considered too desperate a remedy, the failure of all others compelled its adoption.

It was not too soon. The state of the inhabitants was growing steadily worse. Outside the walls the bands of refugees camped in misery, their possessions stacked by them, while in the areas round the fire the familiar scenes of last minute evacuation were still going on. The meaner elements had taken to pilfering or to robbery, according to their natures, and rumours of invasion by French or Dutch had added panic to confusion. The mobs, rallying to hatred for Papists and foreigners, were threatening to break all bounds. Foreigners rash enough to venture into the streets were attacked on sight, and fire-raisers were seen everywhere.

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Imagination turned a package of tennis balls and an apron-full of chickens into fire balls, and their carriers barely escaped with their lives.

Wednesday brought relief to the harassed defenders. More than three-fifths of the city were then destroyed, buildings in the Strand were being blown up to safeguard Somerset House, and the panic had spread to Westminster itself. Despite Charles's vigorous measures, hope had almost vanished. Then, late on Tuesday night, the wind veered, moderated and died. With the morning hope revived. Many of the refugees returned to help, and all round the burning area the noise of explosions told of renewed activity. Fires at Cripplegate and fires in the western Liberties burnt on until nightfall, but by midnight on that day the victory was won.

To the citizens 'counting . . . habitations, not by houses, but by different fires; and even more by cinders than by fires', the victory may have seemed worse than pyrrhic. From the fields 'towards Islington and Highgate' where Evelyn believed that he beheld as many as '200,000 people of all ranks and degrees dispersed, and lying along by their heaps of what they could save', they could see only the great cloud of smoke which hung over the still-smouldering ruins. The debris which blotted out streets and sites alike masked the full loss. Later, statisticians were to compute the destruction at 13,200 houses, the Royal Exchange, the Custom House and the halls of 44 of the city Companies, the Guildhall and nearly all the City buildings, St. Paul's itself and 87 of the parish churches, besides furniture and commodities valued at over three and a half million pounds. In all they reckoned the bill at more than ten millions in the currency of the time. This was the sober estimate of men far removed from the catastrophe. In the draggled ranks of the refugees they spoke of a hundred millions, the figure first announced to Europe. To those who saw that of all their great city but a fragment remained, even this may have seemed too small.

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### § I I

The task of extinguishing the Fire had been comparatively straightforward, the problems it created were not. It was plain that nothing could be done to repair the damage until provision had been made for the refugees and until public confidence had been restored. Beyond that, nothing was certain except the difficulties of the task and the complications which would be imposed by diminished revenues and by the war with France and the States General. It was a position which might have frightened the most sanguine of councillors, but it was tackled with courage and with immediate success. For the refugees the King provided tents and the City permission for temporary building on the open spaces north of its walls. A series of royal proclamations ordered the authorities in the neighbouring parishes to provide lodging for the sick and destitute, and to prevent extortion. Churches, chapels, schools and public buildings were opened for the storage of goods. New markets were appointed, in the unburnt parts of the city and in the villages round it. The magistrates in the Home Counties received instructions to look to the forwarding of supplies, and the city Companies and hospitals commands to look after their poor. More important still, Charles broke down for the refugees the privileges of the corporate towns, commanding 'that all Cities and Towns whatsoever shall without any contradiction receive the said distressed persons and permit them the free exercise of their manual trades'.<sup>1</sup> The city authorities co-operated loyally, meeting specially each day to press the work forward, with the result that, by reason of their joint labours, 'in four

<sup>1</sup> Royal Proclamation, September 5th, 1666: (*Guildhall Lib.*, Broad-sides 13.34). How much advantage was taken of this it is impossible to say, but it was not without effect. Anthony Wood noted that several traders set up in Oxford (*The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, ed. A. Clark (1892), II, p. 86), and in February 1668 two confectioners of London who had migrated to Ipswich obtained an order from the Privy Council instructing the bailiffs of that town to allow them to live and to exercise their trade there in accordance with the Proclamation: (*P.C. Reg.* 2/60, p. 284).

## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

Days, in all the Fields about the Town, which had seemed covered with those whose Habitations were burned, and with the Goods which They had saved, there was scarce a man to be seen'.<sup>1</sup>

To restore public confidence might well have seemed a more difficult task. The consternation caused by the progress of the Fire had found early vent in the wildest of rumours. Tales of plotters and incendiaries had circulated rapidly through the throngs jostling for place at the narrow city gates. Catholics, fanatics, French and Dutch were all accused of starting the fire or of helping its growth. Eye-witnesses and circumstantial details had not been lacking. The rumours persisted. More than once men stood to arms to resist an attack, and foreigners found in the streets were still liable to be instantly set upon. The crowds round the city were in a dangerous mood, and the authorities knew it.

In the provinces the alarm was almost as great. Fostered by uncertainty, the same stories gained rapid credence. No news came from London save lurid accounts of burning and destruction. Without guidance from the centre, prudent magistrates met the situation by arresting foreigners and Catholics, or by detaining or thrusting out of the towns all persons suspected of disaffection. Governors as far distant as Barnstaple and Carlisle called out the Trained Bands. At Falmouth ships were detained in the harbour, at Hull the guards were reinforced, and similar precautions were adopted all over the country. Later, the uncertainty may have seemed fantastic, but at the time men remembered only that Charles's restoration was still a novelty and republicanism common, that religious discontent was widespread, that armed fanatics had more than once put London in an uproar, and that the French and Dutch fleets were fully strong enough to land an invading army.

The danger was real enough, and the authorities knew it.

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Edward Earl of Clarendon* (Autobiography), (Octavo, Oxford, 1759), III, pp. 667-8.

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Charles met it with energy and courage. If London could be kept calm, tension in the rest of England would at once relax. If the citizens could be convinced that there were no plots and no incendiaries the storm would be allayed. First the rumours had to be scotched and then the energies of the citizens diverted into plans for reconstruction. The series of 'relief' proclamations issued on the fifth and sixth of September had shown that the authorities were doing their utmost, and Charles's own labours during the Fire had gained him the personal gratitude of the citizens. On the sixth, the day after the extinguishing of the flames, he utilized and added to this feeling. Riding out to Moorfields he addressed the refugees, reassuring them in person that he, their King, would take a particular care of them all. The rumours of plots he declared to be false. The calamity had been sent by God. It owed nothing to the contrivances of French or Dutch or Papists. He had himself examined many of those detained upon suspicion and found no trace of proof. The first post-Fire issue of the *London Gazette* told the same tale but added that there would be 'a severe inquisition thereupon' by Chief Justice Keeling, members of the Privy Council and of the city. The feeling was not allayed, but it was diverted. Credulous and vindictive evidence given before Privy Councillors or the later Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry was harmless.<sup>1</sup> Witnesses and members wasted time and energy, but riot and persecution were averted, and the price was cheap.

With the situation under control, it was possible to begin the greater task of repairing the calamity. Whilst the poorer citizens 'with more Expedition than can be conceived, set up little Sheds of Brick and Timber upon the Ruins of their own

<sup>1</sup> The stories as given in the report of the Parliamentary Committee may be read in 'A True and Faithful Account of the several Informations exhibited to the Honourable Committee appointed by the Parliament' (1667). They are fantastic almost beyond belief, though they make good reading. But the conviction died hard. In February 1668 the citizens were urging that the Parliamentary inquiry should be reopened, and there can be no doubt that Oates was the more readily believed because his declaration that Jesuits and other priests had been engaged in starting the Fire coincided so entirely with the ideas of the citizens.



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Houses',<sup>1</sup> the pages of the *London Gazette* were filled with notices of the temporary lodgings acquired by Courts, officials, and important men. The city government established itself in Gresham College, the General Letter Office in Bishopsgate, the Custom House in Mark Lane. The Excise Office and the Courts of Arches and of Admiralty moved west, the first to Southampton Fields, the Courts to the Strand. Sir Robert Vyner found room in Broad Street, Alderman Backwell was specially accommodated in Gresham College, and private initiative started an office at which people could leave their new addresses, and friends and correspondents be kept in touch with their movements. Rents soared in the unburnt area,<sup>2</sup> but accommodation was somehow found for all those who needed it, and all talk was of rebuilding.

The resilience of the city was, indeed, remarkable. During the Fire, authority had been temporarily taken out of the hands of its government and placed in those of the Council. On the sixth, anxious to fortify the appearance of control, Charles had written directing the Lord Mayor to assemble the Aldermen and other notables of the city. Twelve members of the Court of Aldermen were assembled on the same day, and reinforced on the tenth by the more unwieldy Court of Common Council. Measures were immediately taken by both bodies for the continued supply of the city and for the reorganization of its life. A special committee was set up to consider means for its subsistence and recovery. Arrangements were made for the new markets and for the continuance of business on the Exchange, for the housing of the City

<sup>1</sup> *Clarendon*, op. cit., p. 668.

<sup>2</sup> The Earl of Castlemaine lamented that the Mercers' Company were asking £1800 for the renewal of the lease of the house he rented from them at Charing Cross, though the rate at six years' purchase was only half that sum: (*Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1666-67, p. 480). Pepys noted that extraordinary sums were being offered, citing one man who was able to obtain £150 for what he had formerly let for £40: (*Diary*, September 7th, 1666). This was immediately after the Fire, when the rush was at its height, but the high prices continued for several years. In August 1668 the Venetian Ambassador described the Fire as the major cause of 'the severe and exorbitant rents' which were demanded and his government so far agreed with his complaint as to increase his grant: (*Cal. S.P. Venetian*, 1666-68, pp. 240 and 260).

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officers, and for the transfer of its whole administration to new premises in Gresham College. Orders were given for the ruins of the Guildhall to be cleared, and for the prisons to be removed to Bishopsgate and Aldgate. The Ward machinery was to function again. Men were to be appointed from each to watch the embers to stop reignition, the watches were to be kept, and sheds set up in which the Beadles might receive and give out orders. Workmen were set to labour through the night in order to clear the Bridge and its approaches from rubbish and so restore land communication with the Surrey bank.<sup>1</sup> The streets, a more formidable problem, were ordered to be cleared by the citizens themselves, each removing the rubbish from his own frontage. The measures were vigorous and, save for the last, effective. They continued in a steady stream as difficulty after difficulty was tackled, but those of the first few days were appropriately rounded off by the appointment of a special committee to attend the Lord Chancellor with drafts of the proposals in preparation concerning the rebuilding of the whole city. Henceforward London, though in ruins, was in control of these ruins. Initiative and direction might, and frequently did, come from the King, but administration was back in the hands of the City. The way was clear for plans for the rebuilding.

### § III

The conception of the new city called forth endless planning and endless discussion. The evils of the old had been glaring, its critics legion. For many years, from the King downwards, men had striven to provide remedies. The Fire gave them their opportunity, and from Charles II to the humblest citizen they took advantage of it. For five months

<sup>1</sup> The City were ordered by the Privy Council to have this done and the Bridge-masters were instructed accordingly. The men, who worked by torchlight, were paid 4s. each for their night's work: (Bridgehouse Weekly Payments Book, third series, II, under September 8th and 15th, 1666).

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the matter was debated by and amongst the authorities concerned. For a time the question lay between an entirely new ground plan and the former plan drastically amended. Then, when it was realized that the first was impossible, the debate changed to the nature and extent of the improvements to be made. Charles's known interest stimulated those round him, the urgency of the calamity drove the City forward. Though the preoccupation of King and Parliament caused unnecessary delay, in the end, on February 8th, 1667, the Royal assent was given to 'An Act for the rebuilding of the City of London'<sup>1</sup> This determined the whole controversy. It was not a very satisfactory measure. Only constant pressure from the City had induced Parliament to turn from other matters in order to give consideration to it, and only Charles's knowledge of the urgency of the situation had caused him to defer prorogation until it had been passed. In its final form it bore all the marks of a difficult yet hurried passage through the committee stage. Its drafting was not impeccable. It was not properly rounded off and within a few months the City was compelled to promote a supplementary Bill. But certain broad improvements had survived and, supplemented by the wise use by the King and the City of the discretion left to them in matters of detail, they represented the extent to which the new London was an improvement on the old.

Following the example of John Gwynn, the architect, it has been customary to affirm that no improvements were made, and to declare that a great opportunity was given and rejected. The blame has been laid on the shoulders of 'interested' citizens, and on a city government too weak to resist them. Wren's grandson set out in its fullest form the story of the citizens' narrowness and obstinacy. Writing of the plan for a new London which his grandfather had produced,<sup>2</sup> he roundly declared that 'The Practicability of

<sup>1</sup> 18 & 19 Charles II, c. 8.

<sup>2</sup> A full examination of the 'rejection' of this plan would be out of place at this point. Those who are interested are asked to turn to Appendix A.

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this whole scheme, without Loss to any Man, or Infringement of any Property was at that Time demonstrated, and all material Objections fully weigh'd and answered'. But nothing was accomplished because of 'the obstinate Averseness of a great Part of the Citizens to alter their old Properties, and to recede from building their houses again on their old Ground & Foundations; as also the Distrust in many & Unwillingness to give up their Properties, tho' for a Time only, into the Hands of publick Trustees, or Commissioners, till they might be dispens'd to them again, with more Advantage to themselves, than otherwise was possible to be effected'.<sup>1</sup> This, coupled with the endless praise which has been accorded to Wren's plan, and Gwynn's statement that it was 'unhappily defeated by faction'<sup>2</sup> have been the mainstays of the legend that London might have been turned into a perfect city. It is a legend which would certainly have surprised Wren's contemporaries.

To outline the course of the negotiations which led up to the Rebuilding Acts is to refute the whole story, but the negotiations in turn are only understandable in the light of the aims of the negotiators and the means at their disposal. Broadly speaking, all parties were concerned to produce a city which would be both more habitable and more beautiful than that which had been so largely destroyed. A subsidiary, but important, aim was to build it in such a manner as to render another Great Fire impossible. The first entailed the modernizing of a city which for more than half a century had been outgrowing its lay-out. If it could be accomplished, the second would be its almost inevitable corollary. But the amount which it was desired to do had to be related to the possible. There was more to be considered than mere beauty of design or splendour of architecture. The authorities had to look beyond paper and pencil. Their world was wider and more

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Wren, *Parentalia: or Memoirs of the Family of the Wrens* (1750), p. 269.

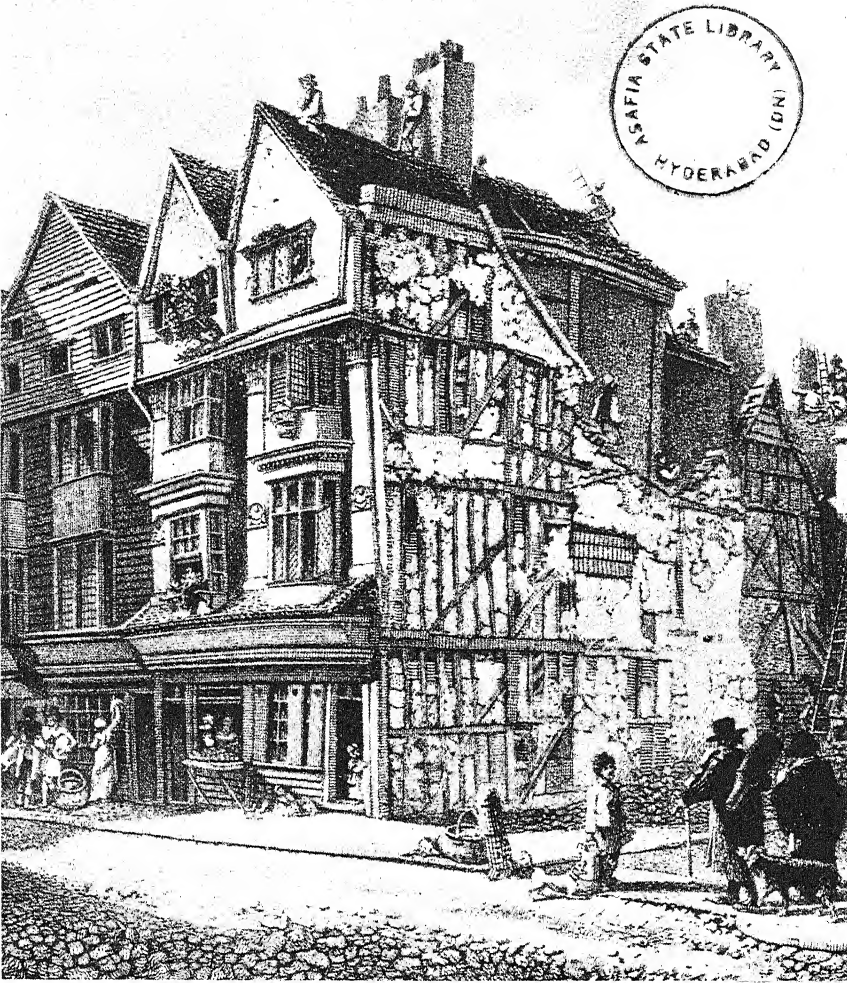
<sup>2</sup> Wren's plan 'as drawn with certain minor modifications by John Gwynn' 1749 is well reproduced in *The Town Planning Review*, x (Liverpool, 1923), plate 13 at p. 76. This reproduction includes his whole description and explanation.

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complicated than the world of the drawing-board, though it is to their credit that they did all that they could to harmonize the two. If it can be proved that they made the best of the possibilities before them, then they must be absolved from the sins which have been laid to their charge.

Let us consider first the replanning dictated by the need to modernize. This entailed two main tasks. The buildings within the city had to be brought into conformity with the ideas of the time, and a solution had to be found for the formidable difficulties imposed by rapid growth during the previous hundred years. The first was bound to be costly, but it was comparatively simple. A good building material, control over the types of houses to be put up, and a greater attention to the lay-out of public buildings would accomplish the essentials. They might not satisfy the wish of courtiers and men of taste for striking architectural glories, but no jury of inhabitants would hesitate to find in their favour. The second was desperately complicated and desperately urgent. If a reminder was needed, it could be found at any time, not only in the still smouldering ruins, but in grave-filled Bunhill Fields. Plague and Fire had always threatened old London. Every square yard of its growth, each narrow, unplanned, ill-built street in its annual extension added to their menace.

This growth had been consistently opposed and consistently carried forward. The increase in the trade of the world, and the changes in the routes along which it passed, had combined with the ever-increasing needs of the government within England to force it on. The problem of fuel, which might have imposed a limit, had been solved by the importation of coals from Newcastle — a solution which created in turn new problems of smoke and dirt, and a new danger during hard winters and years of war. For a time the dissolution of monasteries and other religious houses had provided sufficient space within the walls, but the respite was only temporary. Helped by the influx of religious refugees and by the efflux



'Restoration' houses in Long Lane, Smithfield

Forbidden by the post-Fire building regulations, the inflammability of such structures had made every fire a danger to a whole neighbourhood

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of craftsmen discontented with the control of the Companies, Liberties and suburbs without the walls grew steadily more populous. Despite repeated prohibitions the houses had spread east and west along both banks of the river, and north and south away from it. Gardens within the walls grew fewer, the fields outside them farther and farther away.

The danger of this growth cannot be judged by modern standards. Those concerned for the health and well-being of towns expanding under the stimulus of the Industrial Revolution would have been better able to realize it. In London, as in those later towns, the new streets were not accompanied by extensions to an efficient system of main drainage. 'Company's Water' was not the inevitable maid-of-all-work in the new houses. In matters of sanitation and public health the gulf was not great and the problems similar,<sup>1</sup> though responsible authorities in the 1820's had the benefit of new methods of road construction, and railways were soon to follow. But London's problems did not end with danger from plague or fire. The growth of trade had turned her into a warehouse for commodities from all parts of the world. The wharves below Thames Street and the cellars in the street itself were filled to overflowing. The Exchange and the Custom House were two of her most noted buildings. Despite fluctuations caused by civil strife and foreign war, activity was increasing, and with it the demand for space along the waterside and street room behind it. The line of great houses fringing the river west of the Fleet was giving way to wharves and landing-stages. The growing activity entailed ever more transport. In 1598 John Stow had been moved to describe carts and drays as one

<sup>1</sup> Modern descriptions of the state of affairs in the new industrial towns are sometimes suspect, but there can be no doubt of the informed accuracy of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth's study of Manchester in *Four Periods of Public Education* (1862). This was drawn from his own personal experience and observation. It is abundantly confirmed by the description of the same town given by the Frenchman, Leon Faucher, in 1844: (*Études sur L'Angleterre*, 1 (Paris, 1845)). The immediate reason for the state of affairs in the newly industrialized towns might differ from the reason in London, but the conditions resulting therefrom bore a melancholy resemblance.



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of the two great plagues of London and in the intervening years their numbers had grown fast. Control by licence was a palliative, not a true remedy. The carts were necessary if the goods were to be moved and the citizens supplied. For years the city had been fed by means of river transport supplemented by country carts bringing supplies to markets on the edges of the built-up area. Now the old methods had broken down. Traffic from the wharves into the centre had ceased to be small and the narrow streets were not sufficient to carry it. The suburbs had also to be supplied from those same wharves, and the carts thus employed had to pass through the same narrow streets. The greater population inside and outside the city's boundaries needed greater supplies, yet the streets could not be expanded to meet the changes. Year by year the stoppages grew worse.

Growth in wealth added its share to the problem. Magnates and officials from the city, anxious to reach Whitehall in luxury and state, travelled increasingly often by coach rather than by water.<sup>1</sup> In part this relieved the pressure on the lanes down to the riverside, but coaches had to be housed, and coach-horses required both stabling and bulky foods. The loss was greater than the gain. Stow had been most concerned with the danger of the wheeled traffic to pedestrians. 'The coachman rides behind the horse tails, lasheth them, and looketh not behind him. The drayman sitteth and sleepeth on his dray, and letteth his horse lead him home'.<sup>2</sup> For later writers the difficulties of passage obscured all other evils. London had grown so great that horse-drawn vehicles were essential to her life, and they, in turn, had made essential a new lay-out.

The traffic, indeed, made itself felt in every aspect of the

<sup>1</sup> One curious reason for this was noted by a foreign traveller. He commended the swiftness and ease of water travel in London, contrasting it with the terrible jolting of the hackney-carriages, but added that the former was difficult, because there was always a wind on the river, and this made men's wigs look frightful: (*London in 1710, from the travels of Z. C. von Uffenbach*, trans. W. H. Quarrell and M. Mare (1934)).

<sup>2</sup> *A Survey of London by John Stow*, ed. C. L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1908), I, p. 83.



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city's traditional life. London's water-supply was not particularly out of date, for deficiencies in that respect could not be allowed to accumulate, and private enterprise<sup>1</sup> had profitably supplemented the public supplies. But the great conduits from which so many houses drew their water stood, as might be expected, at cross roads or in prominent places where their size and position provided the maximum hindrance to traffic.

With markets there was the same trouble. The meat market and the butchers' stalls blocked the route along Newgate Street. Stalls took up valuable space in Cheapside. The Stocks Market obstructed the cross roads at the junction of Cornhill and the Poultry, and in Leadenhall Street the country vendors added to the difficulties of passage. It was, in fact, in the street system that the evils of growth were most apparent. Lanes designed to meet the needs of porters and pack-horses could not easily be adapted to carts. Streets which had been sufficient for occasional wagons could not accommodate a throng. Even main thoroughfares such as Gracechurch Street, Cornhill, Newgate Street or Ludgate Hill — even the much-belauded Cheapside — were blocked at each end by 'straight' places or by narrow gateways. Surfaces of cobbles set only in mud and bound together by nothing stronger than gravel disintegrated swiftly under the pressure of iron-shod wheels. Drainage by open kennels, inefficient at the best of times, could hardly even attempt to function if the surface leading to the kennels was destroyed and the kennels themselves broken in. Pedestrians, with no raised pavements and few guard-posts to protect them, were literally driven to the wall.

Inevitably attempts were made to adapt the carts to the streets. Regulations made broad wheels compulsory and limited the number of horses per vehicle. A system of licensing was set up and apparently enforced. But there was no

<sup>1</sup> The most important were Morris's waterworks at London Bridge, the New River Company, and the waterworks at Broken Wharf.

cure in those directions. Adapting the streets was also possible though more difficult and far more costly. For centuries buildings had encroached, little by little, on the thoroughfares. Churchwardens had added to the incomes of their parishes by letting for building the street frontages of the churchyard and the space between the church walls and the street. Private persons had moved their foundations forward when rebuilding. The City had licensed purprestures — private encroachments on the public highways. Gradually the street space between the houses had diminished. Traces of these processes may still be seen all over the city, even in the greatest thoroughfares, for in front of the church of St. Peter, Cornhill, and of the site of St. Peter, Cheap, narrow shops mark them to this day. As land increased in value the temptation became greater, and, land having become so valuable, it was all the more difficult to reverse the process. Stow had inveighed against the evils of purprestures, declaring that their extent had been demonstrated to the City but that no move had been made for their reform. Later generations did nothing to improve matters until Charles II sought to make a real beginning by attacking the most serious of the bottle-necks blocking the entrances to the main streets.<sup>1</sup> In the three years which intervened between the Act and the onslaught of the Plague nothing was accomplished, but it is possible that some action might ultimately have been taken. Had this been the case it would have done much to relieve matters, but it would have left much more undone, and it would have taken years to complete. The growth in population and in the built-up area had, in fact, made necessary a more or less complete replanning. It had made obsolete the conditions under

<sup>1</sup> 14 Charles II, c. 2. This Act applied to London and to Westminster. In the latter something was done, in the former, nothing. The places to be widened were (s. 28):

'The Street or Passage at or neare the Stocks. . . .

The Street or Passage from Fleet Conduit to St Paul's Church. . . .

The Passage and Gatehouse of Cheape side into St Paul's Churchyard. . . .

The Street and Passage by and neere the West end of the Poultry. . . .

and the Passage att Temple Barr.'

All were widened after the Fire, and all could with profit be widened now.

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which the city had lived for so long. Plague and fire demonstrated this in a way which could not be mistaken. Calamity though it was, the Fire did at least provide an unexampled opportunity for doing as a whole something which would otherwise have had to be spread over years.

## CHAPTER II

# PLANS FOR A NEW LONDON

### § I

As some of the records are missing it is impossible to reconstruct all the processes by which the final plan was reached. Enough remain, however, to show clearly what were the main stages and what considerations influenced the authorities concerned. Charles, the first in rank and possibly the first in importance, was genuinely anxious to make all the improvements possible. A man of taste, he had spent many years in Holland with ample leisure to develop an appreciation for its fine brick buildings and well-ordered streets. He had not grown up in London, and its patent disadvantages were not dimmed for him by a kindly veil of familiarity. Evelyn's indictment<sup>1</sup> of its evils had drawn his warm approval, with encouragement to press on to find remedies.<sup>2</sup> Possibly he knew something of Louis XIV's plans for the improvement of Paris and was spurred on thereby. Certainly he had recognized the danger of a serious fire in London and had urged the City to take steps to prevent it.<sup>3</sup> He had seen also that wide streets had become necessary if trade and traffic were to be accommodated, and I suspect that

<sup>1</sup> J. Evelyn, *Fumifugium*, May 1661 (National Smoke Abatement Society's edition, Manchester, 1933).

<sup>2</sup> Charles commanded him to prepare a Bill for the next session of Parliament, against the nuisance of smoke from the city. This was to be prevented, as Evelyn had suggested, by the removal eastwards of the trades causing it. On January 10th, 1662, Evelyn received a draft of the Act from the Queen's Attorney: (*Diary of John Evelyn*, October 1st, 1661, and January 10th, 1662). Nothing more appears to have been done, but the suggestion was again made in his *Londinum Redivivum*, and was incorporated in Charles's proclamation of September 13th, 1666. The State Papers Domestic for that time contain a number of protests by the trades concerned, and it is probable that these killed the scheme.

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1664-65, p. 303; the King to the City, April 11th, 1665.

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he had been largely responsible for the Act of 1662.<sup>1</sup> In April 1665, before the Plague immobilized all such activities, he had shown concern for its enforcement, declaring that he would make an examination of the progress made.<sup>2</sup> His taste and his good sense were, from the start, known to be on the side of the reformers, and it is plain that he would not willingly have sacrificed any practicable improvements. He would, however, be opposed to any undue delay. England was at war with a combination of her most dangerous rivals, and London was almost indispensable to her chances of success. As the largest city and the chief port in the kingdom, her people and her stores were of paramount importance, whilst her taxes and her financiers were vital. Her actual share of the total taxes was large<sup>3</sup> and was comparatively quickly paid, and, whilst the provinces were slowly collecting their grudgingly voted, unwillingly paid share, advances from her bankers and citizens were the only means of keeping Charles's treasury open. The Lord Treasurer was not writing as an alarmist, but was stating a simple truth when, seeking to mitigate the effects of the Fire, he called for the use of every urgency in the collection of the taxes, giving as his reason that London had been 'the centre of his Ma<sup>ties</sup> affaires, and from whome it was formerly supplied untill other parts could performe that share which belonged unto them'. Because of the calamity 'all merchants and Tradesmen belonging to [London] being not able to continue that Credit they have formerly given' the counties must 'like members in the body . . . send Strength unto a Heart thats faint'.<sup>4</sup> Writing much later, Clarendon described the effects more precisely: through Fire and Plague 'The two great Branches of the Revenue,

<sup>1</sup> 14 Charles II, c. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1664-65, p. 303.

<sup>3</sup> She was assessed at approximately one-fourteenth of the total assessment for such direct taxes as the Royal and Additional Aids, and her contribution in indirect taxes was greater.

<sup>4</sup> The Lord Treasurer, the Earl of Southampton, to the Commissioners for the Royal Aid and the Additional Supply for the Town and County of Hereford, September 13th, 1666: (B.M., Add. MS. 11056, f. 259).

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the Customs and Excise, which was the great and almost inexhaustible Security to borrow Money upon, were now bankrupt, and would neither bring in Money nor supply Credit'. The loans on them could not be met, and interest accumulated. Chimney money, the third great branch, also stopped coming in. London, 'the great conduit'<sup>1</sup> of all these revenues, was stopped and dried up. Charles could not possibly ignore or discount these factors. His desire to enforce improvements was undoubted, but it was bound to be tempered by the needs of his policy and his government. For him it was absolutely essential that rebuilding should begin soon and proceed quickly.

In this he was at one with the City. For the latter speed was vital. The whole machinery of city life was dislocated. The wharves were piled high with rubbish, and the streets were blocked with it. The landing stages were destroyed, the markets burnt, and the water pipes cut. The City's own property was mostly in ruins and its rents hard to collect. But, far worse than the dislocation, was the fear that, if rebuilding was long delayed, the citizens might not return. This fear was well-grounded, and was no illusion born of smoke and flames. For three generations or more the 'London area' had been growing as a rival to the square mile of old London. Craftsmen lived and thrived in the suburbs, free from control by the Companies, the costs of their membership and the burden of their offices. There, and still farther afield, lived those merchants who desired to escape the even greater burden of governing the city. The Companies complained, but their spasmodic efforts to enforce the rights given to them by charters were vain. The City, petitioning the Crown in their support, told the same tale, complaining that 'the freedom of London which was heretofore of very great esteeme, is grown to be little worth, by reason of the extraordinary enlargement of the suburbs, where greate numbers of traders and handicraftsmen doe enjoy without charge, equall benefit with the

<sup>1</sup> *Clarendon*, op. cit., pp. 695-6.

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freemen and citizens of London'.<sup>1</sup> Its own policy had been to meet the growth by means of prohibitions on building, and the Crown, concerned to preserve order and to prevent poverty and famine, had given its support to this method. 'Houses on new foundations' were forbidden within three miles of the city wall, and 'for the avoiding of the multitudes of families heaped up in one dwelling house' old houses in that area were not to be converted into tenements.<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth's proclamation, later reinforced by a statute,<sup>3</sup> was followed under James I, Charles I, and the Commonwealth, by a stream of measures directed to the same end. The area concerned varied, increasing to ten miles from the walls in 1657,<sup>4</sup> but, in despite of Crown, Commonwealth, and City,<sup>5</sup> the building went on and continued to do so up to and after the time of the Fire.<sup>6</sup> The demand was there, and no amount

<sup>1</sup> November 1632. *P.C. Reg.*, 2-42, p. 305.

<sup>2</sup> Proclamation of Queen Elizabeth 'Against New Buildings in and about London', July 7th, 1580, printed in W. de G. Birch, *The Historical Charters and Constitutional Documents of the City of London* (1897), pp. 128-31.

<sup>3</sup> 35 Elizabeth, c. 6. This did not apply to houses for 'the better sort of men'.

<sup>4</sup> 'An Act for the preventing the multiplicity of Buildings in and about the Suburbs of London, and within ten miles of the same', June 26th, 1657: In *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, (1911), II, pp. 1223-34. In this Act, as was usual, houses with at least four acres of land were not penalized. The Act appears to have had strong financial motives.

<sup>5</sup> The various proclamations are summarized in Robert Steele, *A Bibliography of Royal Proclamations of the Tudor and Stuart Sovereigns . . .*, I (Oxford, 1910). There is a contemporary list in B.M., Add. MS. 32471, ff. 65-72. The *Acts of the Privy Council* record frequent attempts to enforce them and they were not without effect. Some offenders were dealt with by the Court of the Star Chamber, and some buildings were erected in conformity with the regulations governing construction. Joseph Bates, a tenant to the Bridge for a house in the middle row of the Shambles, was given an additional term of 20 years in consideration of 'his greate Coste and damage . . . sustained in . . . the reforminge of a . . . tenement . . . w[hi]ch hee builded according to covenants but contrary to his Ma<sup>t</sup>. proclamacon' and the *Acts of the Privy Council* note occasional success. But the fact remains that, despite the united wishes of King, Parliament and City, the building went on. Some of it was licensed but most was not. The Restoration made no difference. Charles II's proclamation was as little heeded as those of his predecessors, and MS. 32471 ends with renewed petitions, probably of the year 1663, for the enforcement of the restrictions.

<sup>6</sup> N. G. Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London* (1935), has a number of chapters devoted to this subject, with maps which illustrate broadly the ineffectiveness of the attempts to prevent building. The Repertories for the years after 1672 record almost annual protests against the increasing ranks of houses.

of regulation could prevent its fulfilment. The failure of the policy was clear and yet, despite its evident concern, the City refused to take the obvious course of trying to incorporate the suburbs within itself. This would apparently have solved all problems, except that of supplying so great a concourse of people, yet it was persistently rejected, in spite of ample opportunity for its adoption. In 1633, when Charles and his advisers had decided that ill-government and lack of organization in the suburbs had become intolerable, the Council had even asked the City to consider 'whether they would accept of parte of the suburbs into their jurisdiction and liberty for better government'.<sup>1</sup> The offer was not accepted and, though it was repeated in various forms, it continued to be rejected, even after Charles had made it clear that this would involve the incorporation of the suburbs in direct and legalized competition with the city. In 1636 Charles made an experiment of this kind, but its chances of permanent success were scotched by the Civil War, and the problem remained unsolved. It came up again at the Restoration and with it the possibility of reviving some form of incorporation. The City was approached but persisted in its former attitude.<sup>2</sup> It opposed the separate incorporation of the area, either in part or in whole, but made no move for widening its own organization.<sup>3</sup>

Why this negative attitude was adopted it is hard to see. Though Charles II renewed the old proclamations,<sup>4</sup> there can, by 1661, have been no illusions about the possibility of preventing the existence of the suburbs. Prohibition had failed and the new areas were plainly in need of a better government than that which could be given by the parishes into which they were divided. The organization of the city was flexible and could have been expanded without great

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 47, f. 422, quoted by Brett-James, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> *For.*, 41, f. 247v.

<sup>3</sup> The story of Charles's experiment and of the City's attitude to it is treated in Brett-James, pp. 226-45.

<sup>4</sup> Proclamation of August 16th, 1661 (No. 3322 in Steele, *op. cit.*).



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difficulty. There was no likelihood of the addition of new wards causing the centre to move from the older parts. The wharves and the bridge, the warehouses, the Exchange, and the city courts were all in old London. The Port of London could not be moved, and the conservancy of the river, from Staines to the Nore, was vested in the Lord Mayor. Inclusion would have removed the old grievance of the Companies and settled the perennial complaint that the city was over- and the suburbs under-taxed.<sup>1</sup> Yet the City did not accept it and, instead of offering some constructive solution, confined its activity to efforts to prevent those who used its facilities from escaping corresponding responsibilities by living outside its jurisdiction. This class was potentially large and was likely to become more so as the city degenerated as a place for residence. It included the merchants who traded as members of the various new trading companies: those who had 'used and daily do use and exercise merchandise, negotiation, and commerce, from the port [of London] to parts beyond the seas, and by reason thereof . . . gain and acquire great profits and advantages to themselves' but who, in spite of this, 'refusing, or at least delaying, to become freemen . . . and to be admitted into the liberty . . . although they be capable of the same . . . have privileges, and yet are loose and free from public offices, places, charges and burdens . . .' thereby causing the 'weakening of the government of [London], and impoverishing the freemen, and disparaging of the liberty thereof'.<sup>2</sup> Such men were among the richest merchants in England and, if the broader aspects are neglected, the City

<sup>1</sup> In March 1651 a petition from the City to the Parliament alleged much impoverishment through decay of trade and interruption of foreign trade and 'By the Withdrawing of many of the Abler Cittizens & p[er]sons of quality into the adiacent p[ar]tes where buildinges encrease & in regard they are assessed much less there then heere, by w<sup>ch</sup> also many greate houses stand empty, And rentes fall lowe in the City': (*Jor.*, 41, f. 46v). Five years later, under the stress of Commonwealth taxation, they laid still greater emphasis on the disparity, declaring that it had caused so many citizens to remove into the suburbs that 'in some sense it may be said the Citty is running out at the gates': (*Jor.*, 41, f. 142).

<sup>2</sup> First Charter of King Charles I, October 18th, 1638, printed in W. de G. Birch, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

may be excused for considering suburban craftsmen as unimportant in comparison with such big game. In the hunt for them it was untiring. By the first charter of Charles I those living within ten miles of the city were compelled to take up their freedom if they wished to trade in the port: 'all they who are, or hereafter shall be sons of freemen of the city, or . . . apprentices, or servants of freemen [thereof,] and . . . reside, or inhabit in the same city, or the liberties of the same, or within ten miles distant from any part of the same, and do, or shall use merchandise, and who do, or shall refuse, or delay to become freemen of the said city, shall not be permitted at any time henceforth, by themselves or by others, directly or indirectly, to transport any goods, wares, or merchandises, by way of merchandising in any way, from the port of our city of London, to parts foreign, or beyond the seas.' To make the provision stronger, the officials of the various companies trading overseas were commanded to refuse participation to those who were not free of the city, whilst the merchant-freemen were forbidden to take apprentices within the ten mile area unless for seven years and according to the custom of the city.

The period of the Commonwealth brought no changes in the City's policy towards this class.<sup>1</sup> They constituted a problem, vital to the inherited concepts of London, which no change in the government of the state was likely to alter. The Restoration, in fact, saw Charles being approached with petitions whose phraseology may well have been copied from those laid before his father and before Cromwell. With many protestations of loyalty the reinstated urged, as the dispossessed<sup>2</sup> would also have urged, that 'such persons as liveing in or near [London] did by trade and traffique as Merchants acquire unto themselves great estates & yet did wholly refuse or neglect the freedom of the said Citty' might be compelled to become freemen, and asked the King to insert 'a provisoe to

<sup>1</sup> *Jor.*, 41, ff. 141v, 143, 200v.

<sup>2</sup> The city government was purged during the interregnum and again at the Restoration, when some of those previously removed were reinstated.

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that purpose in the Charters of the severall Corporations of the said Merchants'.<sup>1</sup> Charles expressed his entire agreement with these wishes, declaring that, had the City not expressed them, he would yet have acted upon them,<sup>2</sup> and his charter to the city (June 24th, 1663) confirmed the relevant clauses in the first charter of his father. Before the Fire, therefore, the City was as well armed as it had ever been. But the Fire raised the whole issue in a more dangerous manner than ever before. If the City had been in control of the suburbs the position would have been less difficult, but it had thrown that chance away. With four-fifths of its area burnt, it had to watch its citizens acquiring leases of suburban properties, setting up shops in the Strand, or moving down the river to the havens of Wapping<sup>3</sup> and Deptford. Others moved even farther afield, and, since Charles had opened all towns and cities to the 'burnt' citizens, they could settle freely wherever they would. With them they took their skill and their trade connections. Trade was the foundation of London's greatness and if it migrated, even in part, that greatness might flicker or grow dim. The City was determined that it should not migrate. In the draft for a Rebuilding Act it put clauses which would have compelled all merchants living within twenty miles of the city and trading therein, in person or through agents, to take up office in the city if elected to it. On election they were to take the freeman's oath. This was a sufficiently striking extension of the previous law, for it applied to all, whether capable of the freedom or devoid of any such connection with London. On those who were capable of the freedom and who so traded, the liability was laid 'at what distance soever they inhabite'.<sup>4</sup> But, whatever the precautions, a rapid rebuilding

<sup>1</sup> *Jor.*, 41, f. 247. This, if enforced, would have left the City handsomely victorious, though it would have accentuated the jealousy of the other trading towns. The corporations were, however, not prepared to submit without a struggle, remaining defiant after the new charter: (*Guildhall Recs.*, Small MS. Box 13, No. 13).

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 41, f. 247v.

<sup>3</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, pp. 163-4.

<sup>4</sup> 'Hedds thought requisite to be inserted into the Act for rebuilding', *Jor.*, 46, ff. 132v-133v. The Royal Africa Company and the East India Company, both of them joint stock companies, were specially excepted.

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was certain to be the surest way to preserve London's position. For the City rebuilding could not be treated as a leisurely piece of suburban development. Every delay would make restoration more difficult: speed was the dominant consideration.

The two principals were thus agreed. Rebuilding on the old model could not be tolerated. Improvements had to be made, but a policy of 'improvements at any price' was not practicable. Any measures involving undue delay would have to be rejected as dangerous alike to London and to the kingdom. So far, so good, but at that point the difficulties began. It was not hard to wish, with Evelyn, that 'this Glorious and Antient City . . . from Wood might be rendred Brick (like another *Rome*) from Brick made Stone and Marble'<sup>1</sup> but to produce a design which would both incorporate the necessary reforms and allow rebuilding to proceed within reasonable time was an altogether different matter. It would be difficult to-day, and in 1666 preliminaries which we should now take for granted were completely lacking. An accurate map of the city, title deeds preserved from the catastrophe by banks or fire-proof safes, plans showing the dimensions of each property, insurance policies covering all or most of the losses, good municipal credit and investors eager to subscribe to a reconstruction loan — to-day these would all be available in some measure; in 1666 all were lacking. As some were indispensable, the authorities had to play for time whilst the deficiencies were made good. This called for considerable skill. The majority of the citizens were either living as best they could in the inconvenience and discomfort of temporary habitations or paying heavy rents for houses in the suburbs. Many of them cared nothing for improving London, but wanted only to restore their own properties at the earliest possible moment: all wanted an assurance about the future. Such an assurance had to be given. After a week of intense activity the authorities agreed on the general procedure to be

<sup>1</sup> J. Evelyn, *Fumifugium*, p. 11.

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followed. On September 13th a proclamation was published setting out the King's decisions for the immediate present and his intentions for the future.<sup>1</sup> The first step had been taken, and men could feel that the rebuilding was under control.

### § II

The proclamation was a masterpiece and must have carried conviction to all but the incurably suspicious. It was avowedly an interim measure — 'though such present rules and directions cannot be formed, as must, upon more mature deliberation, be established for the re-edification' — but certain improvements were specified as already decided upon. They struck hard at the causes of the evils of old London. Rebuilding was to be carried out in brick or stone, and all 'eminent and notorious streets' so widened that a fire could not cross from one side to the other. No street was to be permitted which by its narrowness might make passage through it inconvenient. The new city would have a minimum of those lanes and alleys which had so disgraced the old, and its river front would be graced by a 'fair key or wharf'. For himself, the King promised to have the Custom House rebuilt as soon as possible, 'with the most conveniences for the merchants that can be devised', and gave his assurance that he too would share in the sacrifices all individuals were being called on to make for the common good. 'Upon all the . . .<sup>2</sup> lands which belong unto us, we shall depart with any thing of our own right and benefit, for the advancement of the public service and beauty of the city'. It was a generous, if a just, promise, but it was followed by one even more valuable: 'and shall . . . remit, to all those who shall erect any buildings according to this declaration, all duties arising to us upon the hearth-money for the

<sup>1</sup> Printed in W. de G. Birch, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-30.

<sup>2</sup> The Custom House excepted, see above.

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space of seven years'.<sup>1</sup> On the details of all the projected improvements the advice of the City was to be obtained and, to ensure that no man would be damnified by schemes for the general benefit, the City was expressly directed to prepare an exact survey of the ruins showing the ownership of each plot and all those interested therein: 'that so provision may be made, that though every man must not be suffered to erect what buildings and where he pleases, he shall not in any degree be debarred from receiving the reasonable benefit of what ought to accrue to him'.

Whilst the City was carrying out the survey, a plot or model was to be made for the whole rebuilding, 'which being well examined by all those persons who have most concernment as well as experience, we make no question but all men will be pleased with it'. In the meantime no private selfishness was to be allowed to operate to the public detriment. If any man presumed to erect buildings upon the pretence that the ground was his own, the City had strict instructions to pull them down. In addition the name of the builder was to be returned to the King or to the Council, who would inflict exemplary punishment.

The determination to control private initiative in the interests of public good had been sufficiently emphasized, but the bonds were not to be drawn so tightly that they provoked defiance. The authors of the proclamation were fully alive to the determination of the citizens to rebuild as soon as possible. Realizing the difficulties a new plan must cause and knowing that the survey would take weeks, if not months to perfect, they were not prepared to deter those who were willing and able to build conformably to the general plan. Such men were specially authorized to apply to the Court of Aldermen and, on indicating the position of their ground, they would then receive directions as to how to proceed.

<sup>1</sup> This last was in Clarendon's own hand in the draft of the proclamation: (*Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1666-67, p. 122). It not only removed a hated tax but was a promise which it would be difficult to evade. It was ultimately worth some £150,000 to the citizens.

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Possibly this last provision was a compromise forced on the advocates of planning. There is, however, no record of who procured its insertion, and no trace of its having caused any embarrassment to them. Sir George Moore applied under it on behalf of his eight tenants in Fleet Street and his application was granted,<sup>1</sup> but there is no record of any other person doing so. The City dealt with occasional cases of unauthorized rebuilding, but even these were rare and, as one might have expected, all on the edges of the burnt area — in Leadenhall Street; Castle Yard, Holborn; Broad Street; Pye Alley, Fenchurch Street; and near Cripplegate.<sup>2</sup> There are records of a bare dozen, some of them repairs to damaged houses and not entirely new buildings. Probably the records are accurate and there were no others. The streets were not fully cleared from rubbish until December, and long before then a particularly severe winter had put an end to the building season. For a full six months, whilst the planners struggled for her betterment, London must have remained a dismal heap of ruins, shunned at night by all save thieves and beggars, and frequented during the day only by citizens and workmen clearing sites, salvaging fused and twisted metals, or laboriously tracing the lines of what had once been busy streets. If the Fire had occurred in April the lot of the planners might have been hard; as it was, they had everything in their favour.

The proclamation marked the absolute rejection of all ideas of a city rebuilt haphazard, as each owner found it expedient, its street plan unchanged. It was the planners' charter and under its cover the struggle for the new London was fought out. The bulk of the early work fell upon the Privy Council and the City. Parliament did not reassemble

<sup>1</sup> He applied to the Privy Council some time towards the end of October — *Mercurius Politicus Redivivus*, B.M., Add. MS. 10167, p. 642 — and his application was referred to the King's Commissioners for the Rebuilding — Wren, May and Pratt. They certified that there was no objection provided that the manner and materials were such as they would speedily prescribe. The King therefore authorized the building subject to these conditions: (*P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, p. 198).

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 122; *Repert.*, 71, f. 177v, and *Repert.*, 72, *passim*.

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until September 18th and, when it did meet, though active at first, it contributed little to the progress of the work.<sup>1</sup> Convinced of the necessity for a rapid rebuilding, it was quite unable to agree on the methods to be adopted. 'It was the general opinion of the whole House', wrote John Milward, 'that if some speedy way of rebuilding the City was not agreed upon that the City would be in danger never to be built, for if the citizens found a difficulty in it, and that things were not speedily provided for, the merchants and wealthiest of the citizens would alter their course of their life and trade and remove themselves and estates into other countries and so the City would remain miserable for ever.' Yet when agreement was sought, and new models suggested, 'many spoke for them, but more spoke against'. Rebuilding without change was also rejected, and a temporizing measure, half way between the two, though 'much assented to' was only accepted as a last resort. On each of the two days during which the Commons generally and fruitlessly debated the matter there was a strong disposition to avoid the whole issue. It was 'stoutly moved' to refer the matter to the King, and, though this resolution was never actually carried, it being judged improper to trouble him unless the House could at the same time send proposals to help a speedy rebuilding, this was in effect what happened. The subject was dropped, except in private discussion, and the Council and the City were left to do the best they could. This they certainly did, though as they worked through committees, and the committees before long delegated all technicalities relating to building and surveying to officials

<sup>1</sup> On the 22nd the Commons appointed a committee to discuss the question of London and its rebuilding, and from that date until the end of the month they were much concerned with the problem. Then they became wholly immersed in discussing the raising and spending of money for the war. This occupied day after day during October, November and December, to the exclusion of almost everything else. Only in January could Charles, by the most urgent representations, induce them to revert to London's affairs. From the middle of that month, they were given serious, if hurried, attention, and the influence of both Houses seems then to have been important: (See the *Journals* of the two Houses, and *The Diary of John Milward Esq.*, ed. C. Robbins (Cambridge, 1938) from pp. 8-9 of which the various quotations are taken. These all refer to the two days of general debate, September 27th and 28th, 1666.)



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specially appointed to help them in such matters, very few of the records have survived, and the course of their work can only be pieced together with difficulty. However by using the reports submitted by the committees from time to time, and supplementing their information with various letters, diaries and jottings which have also survived, it is possible to trace a fairly continuous outline.

Evelyn's diary makes it plain that, at first, Charles and his advisers considered an entirely new ground plan for the 'burnt' area to be practicable. On the 8th the City had actually asked for this course to be adopted,<sup>1</sup> so that its co-operation was assured, and the planning could proceed in the most favourable circumstances. It began at once. Evelyn's own design, fortified with a long explanation, was presented to Charles on September 13th, and was very well received. The King sent for him on the same day and 'her Ma<sup>ty</sup> and ye Duke onely being present; they examin'd each particular, and discours'd on them for neere an houre, seeming to be extreemly pleas'd with what I had so early thought on'.<sup>2</sup> Wren had preceded him by two days, and others followed with all the expedition they could muster. On the 19th Robert Hooke laid his plan before the Royal Society, and Sir John Lawrence, the late Lord Mayor, stated that 'the court of the lord Mayor and aldermen had approved of it, and greatly preferring it to that of the city surveyor [Peter Mills] desired it might be shown to his Majesty'.<sup>3</sup> These three have survived, but there is no trace of the city surveyor's plan. With others it must long ago have perished, though chance has preserved three more — two drafts by Richard Newcourt, the map maker,<sup>4</sup> and a curious design by Captain Valentine Knight.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1670, p. 713.

<sup>2</sup> *Diary*, September 13th, 1666.

<sup>3</sup> John Ward, *The Lives of the Professors of Gresham College* (1740), p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> In manuscript with a description and reasons. The property of Mr. Francis Edwards, High Street, Marylebone, and deposited at present (1939) with University College, Gower Street, London. For a reproduction and discussion of the plans, see T. F. Reddaway, *The Town Planning Review*, XVIII (Liverpool, 1939), pp. 155 *et seq.*

<sup>5</sup> Described by W. G. Bell, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-2.

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The interest in such new designs, intense at first, must gradually have declined as men became more and more pre-occupied with matters which had to precede the choice of any particular 'model'.

Evelyn gives perhaps the best miniature of the activity when it was still general and before the lists were closed to new plans: 'the King & Parliament are infinitely zealous for the rebuilding of our ruines; & I believe it will universally be the employment of ye next spring: They are now busied w<sup>th</sup> adjusting the claimes of each proprietor, that so they may dispose things for the building after the noblest model: Every body brings in his idea . . . and truly there was never a more glorious phoenix upon earth, if it do at last emerge out of the cinders, and as the designe is layd, with the present fervour of y<sup>e</sup> undertakers'. He had his doubts, however, for he concluded with a cautious 'But these things are as yet im'ature'. Of his own plan he added that 'it caus'd divers alterations'.<sup>1</sup>

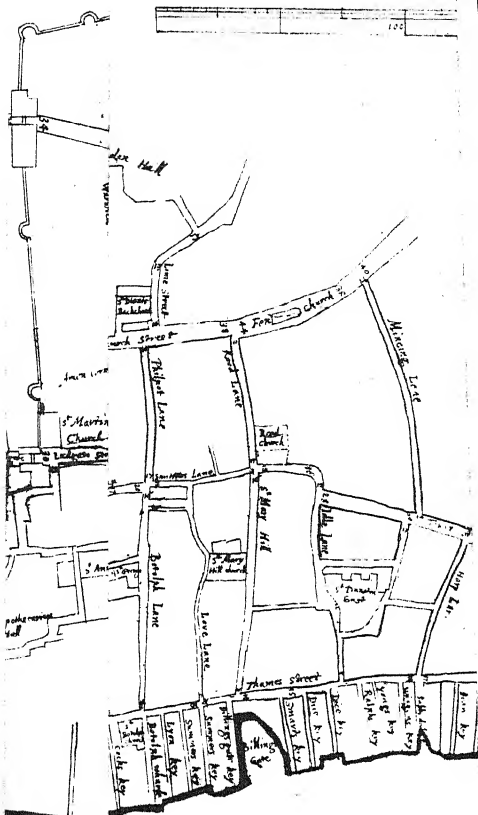
Five days later, when the difficulties had become more apparent and when opinions had had time to harden, Henry Oldenburg<sup>2</sup> sent Boyle a description of the state of affairs. By then a committee of the House of Commons had spent two afternoons vainly discussing the relief of the city, and the two days of general debate had ended, with nothing decided. The King had either appointed or was just about to appoint commissioners to relieve the Privy Council of intractable technical details, and it had become clear that the survey would certainly take months, if indeed it could be completed at all. Oldenburg, like Evelyn, was in a position to hear about almost everything that was afoot, and his letter reflected the general disillusionment. 'The rebuilding of the citty, as to the model, is still very perplext, there appearing three parties in the house of commons about it. Some are for a quite

<sup>1</sup> *Diary*, ed. H. B. Wheatley (1906), III, p. 345, from a letter dated September 27th, 1666, to Sir Samuel Tuke.

<sup>2</sup> He was Secretary to the Royal Society, which included many of the notables of the day, and his correspondence was prodigious.

An exact Survey of the Streets, Lanes  
 within the wains of the City of London;  
 in December Anno Domini 1666  
 By John Lecke, John Jennings, W  
 William Lechbourn, Thomas Simet and A  
 And here reduced into one intire platt. by m  
 By the Order & direction of the Rig  
 Lord Mayor Aldermen & Common Councel

A Scale of Yards



River Thames



new model, according to Dr Wren's draught; some are for the old, yet to build with bricks; others for a middle way, by building a key, and enlarging some streets, but keeping the old foundations and vaults. I hear, this very day there is a meeting of some of his majesties councill, and others of the nobility, with the leading men of the citty, to conferre about this great work, and to try, whether they can bring it to some issue, before the people, that inhabited London, doe scatter into other parts. The great stresse will be, how to raise mony for carrying on the warre, and to rebuild the citty at the same time.<sup>1</sup> Here, in epitome, were the difficulties and the fears: how best to plan the rebuilding, how to finance it, and how to keep the citizens from migrating.

It was at this point that Parliament withdrew from participation leaving the work to the Council and the City. These two had therefore to deal with the whole matter of the rebuilding, including the replanning. The meeting to which Oldenburg referred duly took place, and the City representatives were informed that the King had appointed Dr. Wren, Hugh May and Roger Pratt<sup>2</sup> to join with such surveyors and artificers as the City might appoint, to press forward with the survey. On October 4th the City appointed Robert Hooke, Edward Jerman, and Peter Mills.<sup>3</sup>

The appointment of these six men was almost as important a landmark as the proclamation of September 13th. Though nominally they were only entrusted with the survey, neither the Council nor the City had any other body of experts to turn

<sup>1</sup> John Ward, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>2</sup> I have not been able to find any record of this appointment except its mention after this meeting in the Journals of the Common Council: (*For.*, 46, f. 123). In the *Parentalia* (p. 263) it is asserted that after the Fire Wren was appointed '*Surveyor-General and principal Architect for rebuilding the whole city*'. No date or reference is given, and the statement, in its full sense, is untrue. Wren was appointed Surveyor-General of the Royal Works in 1669, after Denham's death. Charles could only have imposed a surveyor-general with authority over the rebuilding of the city by an arbitrary exercise of his power. Late in 1667 he attempted to induce the City to appoint its own Lord Mayor to such an office, only to be firmly rebuffed: (*P.R.O.*, *S.P.*, *Dom. Car.* II, 202, ff. 95-6; *For.*, 46, f. 189; *Notes and Queries*, February 11th, 1939).

<sup>3</sup> *For.*, 46, f. 123.

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to,<sup>1</sup> and in practice all technical matters seem to have been referred to them. The King's nominees were actually styled 'His Majesty's Commissioners for Rebuilding', a title which reflected their real status. The City's had no greater title than 'surveyors' but, as they were very soon authorized periodically to meet and consult with the royal commissioners concerning the 'manner forme and highth of Buildings in this City the Scantlings of Timber removeing of Conduits and Churches and Alteraçon of the Streetes', their scope seems to have been very much the same. They were, it is true, specifically ordered to 'give noe Consent or make any Agreem<sup>t</sup> therein without the speciall Order of this Court'<sup>2</sup> but this was only a normal precaution on the City's part. A recommendation which had the unanimous support of the joint body could hardly fail to have been accepted; anything which they declared to be impracticable must have been turned down. Until legislation became vital, and Parliament was compelled to interest itself once more, these six men seem to have been engaged in devising the building regulations and house-types for the new London, managing the survey, and estimating what improvements could be effected. Exactly how much the rebuilding owed to them, nobody can say, but the importance of their contribution is clear.

A better equipped body could hardly have been found. The professional architect, as we know him to-day, was unknown in Restoration England. The great contractor, prepared to undertake any building from a bridge over Sydney Harbour to a vast 'World Exhibition', was a man of the distant future. In taste and design, the educated 'amateur' was still supreme; and master-carpenters,<sup>3</sup> — masons and bricklayers were only beginning to climb into the position of contractors on a large

<sup>1</sup> The City could refer matters to its master workmen, who were competent to deal with all normal repairs to its buildings, but they could hardly have tackled a matter so large as the replanning.

<sup>2</sup> October 31st, 1666. *Jor.*, 46, f. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Fitch, carpenter, is an outstanding example. As contractor to the City for the whole of the work of canalizing and wharfing Fleet Ditch he was for a time paid on account as much as £1000 per week (See below, pp. 214-16).

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scale.<sup>1</sup> There was no ready-made personnel from whom to choose the commissioners. They had to be improvised, and as an improvisation the six nominated could not have been bettered. Pratt had studied architecture in France, Italy, Flanders and Holland, had a high reputation as a practical architect, and had four great mansions to his credit, including the Chancellor's splendid but ill-fated town-house in Piccadilly. With May and Wren he had already been engaged on the survey of St. Paul's, and his services as a commissioner were to gain him a well-earned knighthood before he inherited property and retired to look after it.<sup>2</sup> May is more difficult to place. As 'Hugh May, Esquire' he had been appointed Paymaster of the Works on Charles's return from exile, and in that capacity had dealt with the great overhaul of the royal palaces and buildings which occupied the years before the Fire. As a result, he was known to everyone about the Court and was called on to act as architect for a number of great houses; but whereas Pratt was of the same type, class and calibre as Evelyn, whose friend he was, May seems rather to have belonged to the world of Pepys. His character suggests, indeed, the responsible official, rather than the gentleman of culture. He acted as deputy to Sir John Denham, the Surveyor-General, when the latter was ill, but failed, in competition with Wren, to secure his place when he died. He had, however, already been promoted to be Controllor of the Works, a post he held until his death in 1684. Whatever his history, however, he was admirably qualified to act as a commissioner. His knowledge and his experience were both great, and his position had given him an insight into the finance of building which neither of his companions could have possessed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the position of the masons, see D. Knoop and G. P. Jones, *The London Mason in the Seventeenth Century* (Manchester, 1935).

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*; R. T. Gunther, *The Architecture of Sir Roger Pratt* (Oxford, 1928); H. Avray Tipping, *English Homes*, Period iv, 1 (1920). The last two give full particulars of Pratt's houses.

<sup>3</sup> May is not in the *Dictionary of National Biography* but there are frequent references to him in *Pepys's Diary* and in the *State Papers Domestic*. I give from the calendar of the latter some of the references to the main stages in his career. Paymaster of the

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Wren, the junior of the Commissioners, was in many ways the worst qualified of the three. Sir Reginald Blomfield, who is not the least of his admirers, has even declared that his appointment had in it more of influence than of justice: 'The Fire of London was his opportunity, and by a rather shameful job he was given his chance by Charles II. The fact was, that between 1660 and 1670, Wren was the merest amateur in architecture.'<sup>1</sup> Charles's foresight was justified, but it is well to keep this judgment in mind and to remember that the Dr. Wren whom he appointed in 1666 was the Savilian Professor of Astronomy and the brilliant member of the Royal Society, rather than the great architect he was later to become.<sup>2</sup> His plan for the rebuilding was probably a stronger recommendation for his inclusion than was his design for the Sheldonian.

The City's nominees were less distinguished and we know less about them. Wren's counterpart was Hooke. Brilliant, cantankerous, secretive, always in ill-health, he was Curator of Experiments to the Royal Society, Professor of Geometry at Gresham College and already well known for the experimental researches which were later to bring him enduring fame. His skill as an architect was then unknown,<sup>3</sup> but his plan for

<sup>1</sup> Sir Reginald Blomfield in an address to the Royal Historical Society, June 27th, 1931, on 'English Architecture in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries': (Trans. R. Hist. Soc., Fourth Series, xiv, p. 129).

<sup>2</sup> His only completed building at that time was the Chapel of Pembroke College, Cambridge.

<sup>3</sup> He was later responsible for a formidable list, including Bethlehem Hospital, Montague House, Bloomsbury, Merchant Taylors' Hall, and the town and country houses of many aldermen: (*The Diary of Robert Hooke*, 1672-80, ed. H. W. Robinson and W. Adams (1935), p. xxv). Cambridge owes to him the Pepys Building at Magdalene College. See also R. T. Gunther, *Early Science at Oxford*, x (Oxford, 1935), and Miss M. E. Batten's article in the twenty-fifth volume of the Walpole Society (Oxford, 1937).

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Works: appointed in June 1660, vol. 1660-61, p. 73; experience in that office, vols. 1660-61 — 1665-66 *passim*. During the years covered by those volumes some £88,000 passed through his hands for expenditure on various royal buildings: (*Cal. Treas. Bks.*, 1667-68, pp. xxx-xxxii). Deputy to Sir John Denham, vol. 1665-66, p. 354. Competition with Wren for the post of Surveyor-General, vol. 1668-69, p. 224. Controller of the Works, vol. 1667-68, p. 507, and thereafter *passim*.

Mr. Tipping gives particulars of some of the houses he designed and declares that

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the rebuilding was sufficient to ensure his appointment by the City. Of the three he alone could be classed as the equal of the King's nominees. Of Mills and Jerman I know so little that to set it down is to risk disparaging them. Mills had for many years been the City Surveyor and it is just possible that Jerman had been associated with him.<sup>1</sup> In any case, whether one or both had held the post, the City's nominees brought with them an unrivalled experience in every kind of building. The 'City works' included the care and maintenance of all kinds of property and the City Surveyor might be called in to consider any problem from repairs to London Bridge to the tapping of distant springs, or from matters of prisons and gates to the construction of market buildings. Mills and Jerman were therefore able to provide a skilled local knowledge which the commission could not have obtained anywhere else, and which was indispensable to its work. This, combined with their practical experience, must have made them indispensable members of the joint body.

Although the Commissioners were nominally appointed to manage the survey, they dealt, as has been shown, with other technical matters and they dealt also with the larger matter of the replanning. The last mention of an entirely new plan actually appears in their records, and it may be that they finally reported against its practicability. That can only be a conjecture, but the order of events makes it seem probable. At the beginning of October the Rebuilding Committee of the

<sup>1</sup> Jerman's name appears in all sorts of guises. Jarmin, Jarmyn, Jarman, Jermin and Jermyn are the normal variants. He must have been a man of some eminence, for he was chosen to rebuild the Royal Exchange, next to the Guildhall the most important secular building in the city. Unfortunately he died in 1668 before it was completed and his contribution to the new city was therefore limited to this and to designs for a number of the Company's halls. Pratt, in a brief note about the city nominees, described him as 'an experienced man in buildings'. He should be carefully distinguished from the City carpenter, Roger Jerman, who undertook many contracts during the rebuilding. He is referred to as the City's Surveyor in one isolated case: (*Journals of the Bridgehouse Committee*, I, f. 165).

'of the architects who took the lead when building activity revived in England after the Commonwealth slump no one was in greater request than Hugh May': (op. cit., p. 93, and *passim*).



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Privy Council had decided to sit every Tuesday afternoon to hear the Commissioners' progress. On the 11th, at their instigation, the Commissioners decided that the breadth of the future streets should be:

'Key, one hundred feet;  
High Streets, seventy feet;  
Some other Streets fifty feet and others forty two;  
The least Streets thirty feet or twenty five;  
Alleys, if any, sixteen feet.'

This done, there arose the question of how the Commissioners should continue their task. To avoid disputes about future procedure, they agreed, apparently at Pratt's instigation, to resolve first 'whether streets shall be laied out in the places where they formerly were, or in such other as shall bee demonstrated to be more for the beauty and conveniencie of the citty, beeing [*sic*] that no man can tell how to offer any acceptable designe till this bee determined, nor any one to build till that design be agreed upon'. After that they were to decide on places to be allocated for the storage of the materials which would be needed for the rebuilding.<sup>1</sup>

These three subjects show the importance of the Commissioners and the scope of their work. There is no note of their decisions on the last two but on the 17th they dealt with the survey and, both matters having presumably been brought into a final form, their immediate principals were called in to consider their resolutions. The principals met on the next day — a joint session of the Rebuilding Committees of the Privy and Common Councils.<sup>2</sup> The results of this meeting were drafted by the 22nd and accepted by the full Common Council two days later. In the form of a petition to the Crown they dealt with the survey and with the widths of the streets. For the latter it was desired:

<sup>1</sup> This account of the Commissioners is available through the fortunate discovery at Ryston Hall, Norfolk, of some of Pratt's notes. These have been printed in full in Mr. R. T. Gunther, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> For this, for the report to the Privy Council of the City's petition, and for the proceedings thereon see *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, pp. 189, 194-7.

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'That the Key on the Waterside be fowrscore foote, and Thames street forty foote wide.

That the Street from Fleet-Street to the Tower be Fifty foote wide.

The Street from Holborn to Algate fifty five Foot.

The Street from the Bridge to Byshopsgate Street Fifty foot.

From St. Paul's Church-yard into Cheapside Forty five Foot.

From Guild-hall into Cheapside Threescore foot with a Piazza.

And the Street opposite to that Street, out of Cheapside to Thames Street Forty foote.

From Aldersgate into Cheapside, & so into Thames-street Forty foote.

From the Exchange to Thames-street & so to Moregate Forty Foote.

Pater-noster Rowe Forty foote.

Lumbard Street Forty foote.

Old Baylie into Smithfeild, Thirty five Foote.

And from Old Baylie to Black-Fryers stayres, Thirty five Foote.

From Warwick-Lane to Puddle Dock, Thirty foote.

That the Middle Rowes in the Shambles & Fish-Street be taken with the Stocks and other such like Buildings.

All streighte [narrow] Entrances into Cheapside to be widened'.<sup>1</sup>

Plainly the views of Oldenburg's middle party had gained the day, although rebuilding on an entirely new ground plan had been considered by Commissioners, one half of whom were themselves designers of such plans.

The City's petition was submitted to the Privy Council on October 24th as part of the report of the Council's own Re-building Committee. Approval was given, and the petition was

<sup>1</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, pp. 196-7.

then redelivered to the Chancellor to be drawn up in the form of a royal proclamation. This in turn received approval on the 31st and on that day, probably with a sigh of relief, the Common Council gave orders that all proposals made and reported to it for the altering and enlarging of streets were to be laid aside until the general survey had been completed.<sup>1</sup> The City had agreed on the main lines of the improvements to be introduced, had obtained the King's approval and sanction for them, and was not going to devote any more time to academic discussion. When the survey had been completed and they had something definite to go on, then the matter could profitably be reopened. Until then the surveyors were to maintain consultations with the Royal Commissioners, leaving the City itself free to deal with such pressing problems as supplies of brick, timber and lime for use in the rebuilding, methods by which to prevent disputes between landlord and tenant over their respective liabilities to rebuild, and, most difficult of all, means to finance the whole matter of rebuilding and improvement.

The great importance attached to the survey<sup>2</sup> makes it necessary to describe it in some detail. So far as the public were concerned it had its origin in the royal proclamation of September 13th, in which the principle was laid down that no individual should suffer loss through the carrying out of schemes for the general benefit. If there was to be a new ground plan or even radical alteration of the old plan this principle was plainly necessary, but the method proposed carried within it the seeds of every kind of difficulty and delay. A survey was to be made to establish 'to whom all the houses and ground did in truth belong, what term the several occupiers were possessed of, and at what rents, and to whom, either corporations, companies, or single persons, the reversion and

<sup>1</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 129.

<sup>2</sup> This survey of interests in land should not be confused with the survey of the streets and ground plan of London. The former dealt with interests and was confined to the burnt area, the latter with the ground plan of 'Our Citty of London w<sup>th</sup> the suburbs adjoyneing'. Charles had ordered Wenceslaus Hollar and Francis Sandford to make the street survey only four days after the end of the Fire: (*P.R.O.*, *S.P. Dom.* Charles II, Entry Book 23, p. 128).



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inheritance appertained'.<sup>1</sup> Reasonably construed, this entailed firstly a plan showing the dimensions of each plot, and secondly an annexe setting out all the interests concerned therein. With these particulars available it would be possible, or so it was thought, to distribute sites on a new ground plan proportionable to the value of each owner's former holding. But, before this could be done, it was absolutely necessary to have completed returns for all or nearly all of the 'burnt' holdings.

It is impossible to tell whether the authorities realized the difficulties this procedure would involve. However, having made their decision, they did their very best to carry it out, firstly by means of returns brought in by the citizens themselves, and then, when that had failed, through contractors. The first scheme was proclaimed by the City to all concerned on September 22nd.<sup>2</sup> It was ordered that 'the last occupiers do within 14 daies . . . bring into the Beadles Booth, set up in the respective Wards, for Publick service, . . . a perfect Survey of the Ground whereon his House, Shop or Warehouse stood, with their Appurtenances, and his Right and Term therein: and that all others who have any Right or Inheritance, Lease, or otherwise to the same, do likewise bring . . . their respective Claimes, to the end that the whole may be there Recorded, by the Clerks that shall be thereunto appointed. . . .' The order was obeyed, and claims, addressed from all manner of temporary dwellings in the area round London, duly began to trickle in. The clerks prepared their books and property owners admonished their tenants to make the necessary returns.<sup>3</sup> But foundations were covered with ashes and rubble, and it was not easy to uncover them, or to map them when they were uncovered. The task was beyond the strength of many occupiers, and not everyone could comply with the

<sup>1</sup> W. de G. Birch, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> The proclamation has not survived, and is not even mentioned in the City records. The summary given is that published in the *London Gazette*, No. 89, September 20th-24th, 1666.

<sup>3</sup> See the letter sent out by the Clerk to Christ's Hospital to the Hospital's tenants, printed in W. G. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

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injunction sent by Christ's Hospital to its tenants, 'take with you workmen'. Some lacked the money, others had it but could not find the men. Labour supplies were not unlimited. Many were drawn off to clear wharves and City buildings. The Press-gangs were out, and the Plague had taken its heaviest toll of those from whom casual labour might normally be most easily drawn. The clerk for St. Bride's and St. Martin Ludgate ruled his book<sup>1</sup> and set out spaces for the occupier of each house in his area. There were approximately 1100 names, and those against which he was able to enter 'claim received' number less than 100.

Charles met the obvious failure of this method by the appointment of the three commissioners to whom reference has already been made, giving them the duty, in collaboration with the City, of arranging for the survey to be carried out by contractors. The City concurred and the joint commission met. After long discussion, it was decided that, despite its many difficulties, the survey was possible. To ensure just measurement and to protect the interests of each inhabitant the City ordered the Deputies and Common Councilmen to attend during the surveyors' progress through their Wards, and the Commissioners began negotiations with possible contractors.

There was no enthusiasm to undertake the task. After starting with an offer of one shilling per house, the foundations to be laid bare by the occupier, the terms had first to be increased by one half and finally by one and a half. At two shillings and sixpence per house the contractors rather grudgingly consented to act. The City had already begun its side with the issue on October 10th of an almost tearful proclamation describing the survey and once more commanding<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This book is preserved among the records at St. Bride's Church, Fleet Street, and some of the claims submitted are also to be found there. Other books and claims may survive, but I have not so far been able to trace them.

<sup>2</sup> The first traceable general order for the clearing of rubbish had been issued on September 10th: (*For.*, 46, f. 120). This ordered the citizens to clear the streets in front of their sites before they started work on the ruins. It had not been observed.

that the foundations should be cleared, 'which hitherto, how earnestly soever the same hath been pressed and perswaded by former Precepts, hath been almost totally neglected, to the great Discouragement of the Magistrates, and retarding of those Proceedings, which otherwise by Gods Blessing, His Majesties, and the Parliaments Favour and Assistance, and the Indeavours of good Citizens, had by this time far prevailed towards a beginning of this Work'.<sup>1</sup> This may have had some effect but it was not sufficient. According to one estimate, the debris of the Fire raised the ground level of London by four feet,<sup>2</sup> and though this is certainly an exaggeration, the clearing of even one half of that amount was a task to be avoided if possible. Landlords tried to put it upon their tenants, and tenants to lay it on their landlords. Neither would pay the survey fee and neither would admit a liability to clear the rubbish. The rubbish therefore remained and, since all the parties were scattered and inaccessible, coercion was almost impossible. Both Commissioners and City were unwilling to set a precedent for condoning evasion by ordering workmen to begin the clearance and in desperation Charles was called on to reinforce the City's authority with his own. The Council meeting which approved the proposed street widths approved also a proclamation<sup>3</sup> which repeated with some improvements that of the 10th. It further laid down that the order of the surveys was to be that of the streets mentioned on page 61, thus directly linking the survey with the improvements. With compliance went the approval of the King; non-compliance was to be punished. 'And as particular notice shall be taken of

<sup>1</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, Broad sides 13, 85. This was a survey pure and simple, and did not include any attempt to record the various interests in the sites measured. Possibly the Commissioners had already decided to relinquish that side of the work, for it is not mentioned again.

<sup>2</sup> T. Hale, *An Account of several New Inventions and Improvements now necessary for England* . . . (1691), p. lxi.

<sup>3</sup> The petition for this proclamation was assented to by the Privy Council, and the draft prepared by its Rebuilding Committee was shown to and approved by the City, but it is not clear whether it was finally published. The last record of it is a request by the City that it might do this: (*P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, pp. 194-7; *Jor.*, 46, f. 127 and f. 130; *Repert.*, 72, f. 6).

those who do cheerfully submitt and Conforme themselves to these so necessary Directions, as Persons well affected to the Good of this City; So if any Men shall obstinately oppose what is so much for the Generall good of the said Citty, they shall undergoe such punishment & penalties as are due to their Refractoriness, over and above his Mats displeasure.'

Even so the survey seems to have failed. There is no record of its completion or of its being used in determining improvements. When the staking was finally carried out, and compensation was due for the area laid into the streets, measurements had to be taken to show how much each man had lost. If the survey had been available this would seldom have been necessary, if it had been there it would certainly have been used. That it was not so used lends support to the idea that it was abandoned as hopeless, and on November 19th the City started measures which confirm this. On that day Alderman Backwell offered to lend £200 to finance a contract for measuring and staking the streets, and about the same time Charles gave £100 to pay for clearing them from rubbish.<sup>1</sup> It is tempting to think that Charles, besides his gift, was the instigator of the loan and of the policy which ended the deadlock the failure of the survey had caused. This cannot be proved but, whether the initiative came from him or from some other source, he must have sanctioned the change, for it came into force at once. On the same day two Common Councilmen with Wren and Hooke were empowered to contract for the measuring.<sup>2</sup> Two and a half weeks later the rubbish had been cleared,<sup>3</sup> and the map was well on its way to completion. The

<sup>1</sup> *City Cash Books*, 1666-67, f. 200; *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 322.

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 130. Backwell was very ungraciously treated over his loan. He did not ask for repayment until February 1677, when he was himself in low water. When he did apply he produced the necessary papers and made no request for interest. Yet it was only after the fullest inquiry and fifteen months' delay that the money was paid, and then without any mention of thanks: (*Repert.*, 82, ff. 75, 117; *Repert.*, 83, ff. 168v, 172v). The money was paid out of the coal dues (see entry under May 3rd, 1678).

<sup>3</sup> The total cost in labour was £103 15s. 4d., and payment was authorized by the Court of Aldermen on December 6th, 1666. As authorization was not normally given until such work had been completed, the streets must have been cleared by that date. The labourers later employed for staking the streets were paid 1s. 4d. each per day and



earlier methods had been reversed and the attempt to compel the inhabitants to clear the streets had been given up. The survey was dead, and, with it, all that it implied.

This was a fateful change for the future of London. It may be doubted whether, even with the help of the survey, the authorities would have been able to redistribute sites, but, until their recording was abandoned, a new ground plan was still just possible. The Privy Council might have reversed its earlier decision, or modified it to allow for the replanning of part of the burnt area, say that west of the city wall. The absence of a survey resolved all such possibilities. Without it redistribution of properties was impossible. Failing redistribution land could only be acquired for improvements by means of direct purchase. Something might be done by isolated exchanges,<sup>1</sup> but, apart from that, compensation would have to be paid in actual cash to those expropriated for the public benefit. From this time forward the extent of the improvement possible was clearly defined by the funds available to pay for it.

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the land for the extension of Leadenhall Market was acquired in this way.

on this basis, assuming fourteen working days between November 20th and December 5th, the City must have employed over one hundred men on the job – a striking proof of its wish for speed.

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FROM the moment that payment had to be adopted as the only means of obtaining improvement, the possible scope of the replanning was entirely altered. Money could only come from London or from the State, and neither was in a position to provide it. The City was already faced with the expenditure of some £100,000 for the restoration of its public buildings. A direct tax, which was its usual way of meeting extraordinary expenses, was clearly out of the question, and apart from taxation, it had no reserve funds upon which to draw. Its ordinary revenues did not cover its ordinary expenditure, and for years its finances had been growing more and more precarious.<sup>1</sup> Normal years are hard to find in this period but, before the Plague, from Michaelmas 1661 to Michaelmas 1664 its average annual receipts, excluding borrowings and Orphans' money, had been £13,757 7s. 1½d., and its average outgoings £24,901 18s. 6½d. Quite apart from the ill-effects of the Fire, it was already heavily in debt and, though it had long been busy seeking methods to improve its position, insolvency was drawing steadily nearer. Clearly, if improvements were to be made, the City could only contribute towards them if its liability was spread over many years, and then only if its own finances took a turn for the better.

To-day, of course, the liability would automatically be spread over a long period. Either a municipal or a national loan would be raised, and expenditure on capital improvements would be made as required and redeemed over perhaps a quarter of a century. But in 1666 long-term lending was still in its infancy. The City could, and did, regularly borrow to

<sup>1</sup> See chap. vii for a fuller treatment of the City's revenues.

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meet its own day-to-day needs,<sup>1</sup> but only in small amounts, for short periods, and almost entirely from the 'London area'. Scattered savings were attracted to it from outside this area, but the movement was not great nor the total large. The normal loan was for less than £500, lent for three to six months<sup>2</sup> by a person having some direct connection with London, and even the aggregate borrowed in this way was not large. In 1666 the total outstanding barely exceeded £40,000, and the highest figure reached during the preceding fifteen years had been little more than double that amount.<sup>3</sup> The Fire had created a position for which such methods were inadequate. To carry out the improvements approved on October 24th might have cost anything up to one and a half million pounds. Even the partial completion of the programme accepted six months later cost £400,000. For such purposes an expansion of the short-term debt would have been useless even supposing that it could have been managed, and the sums occasionally deposited in the past on longer terms would have been swallowed up in a day.<sup>4</sup>

Nor could the national exchequer do anything to help. From the beginning of his reign Charles had been hampered at every turn by lack of money. Taxes which even theoretically would not have been sufficient to allow him to meet the debts he had inherited from his father and from the Commonwealth had actually fallen far short of the yield which had been put upon them in Parliament's estimates. Every branch of the revenue was already being used as security for advances either of credit or of cash, and the demands of the war were driving harassed officials to ever more doubtful expedients. Unpaid

<sup>1</sup> There is no means of telling whether the borrowing started with this intention.

<sup>2</sup> Where a period was specified. Many show no period, merely reciting that interest is payable so long as repayment is forborne. Others specify that repayment shall be made on demand.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> Loans were sometimes made by trustees for children, or by persons wishing to place money, for the use of their children, in a safe place. More occasionally sums were deposited for the term of the depositor's life. The proportion of these loans to the total was small.

sailors and complaining contractors troubled Pepys by day and, if he suffered from unrecorded dreams, tallies and tickets must surely have haunted him by night. Whilst Parliament argued acrimoniously over half a dozen new taxes and passed none, the administration was increasingly dependent on the good will of financiers and contractors great and small. 'Such is our misery that we must reckon it a kindness to be trusted' wrote one royal official, and he must have voiced the opinion of most of his colleagues.<sup>1</sup> No help could come from that source. Charles could grant exemption from taxes, but it was beyond his power to lend or give any of their proceeds.

Parliament could have stepped in, however, had it wished, and theorists were not lacking to propose some such remedy. Sir William Petty, always ingeniously wise, argued that a national tax devoted to the rebuilding would be an excellent investment, and fortified his premise with a number of good reasons.<sup>2</sup> Sir Edward Ford went a step further. He reasoned that, as the use of money was to adjust contracts and accounts, and as securities for money, for example, bills of exchange, contented men just as well as money, London should be rebuilt out of bills secured on the taxes, since no money was securer than taxes by Act of Parliament. The King would in this way have the money at once, and the total would be repaid by yearly and easy payments.<sup>3</sup> If Charles ever read these proposals he must have reflected grimly on the real position. Parliament was arguing fiercely over taxation absolutely necessary to carry on a fairly popular war. It was not in the least likely to levy anything for London, whose citizens were actually clamouring for the repayment of overdue moneys advanced on one of the 'secure' Parliamentary taxes. The nation would spare nothing, the King could give nothing. Long-term public loans were as

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Coventry to Pepys, June 28th, 1668. He added 'though we pay for it': (*Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1667-68, p. 463). Though written some time after the Fire, the letter reflects accurately enough the position eighteen months earlier.

<sup>2</sup> See the section characteristically described as 'Heads about Rebuilding' in *The Petty Papers*, ed. the Marquess of Lansdowne (1927), I, pp. 26-30.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Edward Ford, *Experimented Proposals how the King may have Money ... London may be Rebuilt and all Proprietors satisfied* ... (1666).

yet uninvented, and London was therefore left to her own resources. If improvements or alterations were to be made, it was against those resources that they had to be measured.

Nevertheless, for a time the adoption of the new policy gave a fillip to men's spirits. The streets were actually being cleared, the dead weight of the unfulfilled survey was lifted, and optimism spurted. Pepys met Hugh May when this mood was still strong, and noted in his diary: 'I spoke with Mr. May, who tells me the design of building the City do go on apace, and by his description it will be mighty handsome, and to the satisfaction of the people'.<sup>1</sup> Pepys himself, however, was anxious about the already over-long delay, for he added 'but I pray God it will not come out too late'. His anxiety was shared to the full by the City. Freed from the attempt to enforce the survey, it turned with renewed energy to the task of devising legislation to govern the rebuilding. This matter had occupied part of its attention ever since the completion of the first measures of relief. Amongst the committees appointed to plan the rehabilitation of City buildings and to deal with the mass of extra work of all kinds which the Fire had caused, were others whose task it was to devise legislation and to arrange with the city members to have it presented to Parliament. As early as September 26th Sir Richard Ford, a vigorous pushing alderman and a member of one of the committees, had been censured for putting before the Commons proposals which he declared were those of the City though they were no more than drafts waiting final approval.<sup>2</sup> £25 in gold had been sanctioned as a gift to the clerk of the Parliament 'for some special services done and to be done to the state of the City',<sup>3</sup> and constant touch was maintained with the Chancellor for his favour, his help, and his sanction.<sup>4</sup> But the scope of this early

<sup>1</sup> *Diary*, November 25th, 1666.

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 120.

<sup>3</sup> *Repert.*, 71, f. 172. He was Mr. Goldsborough, and the gift was sanctioned on September 18th, the day Parliament reassembled.

<sup>4</sup> He was Chairman of the Rebuilding Committee of the Privy Council and therefore all three were vital to the City. When Ford made his proposals, an apology was hastily sent to him, disowning Ford and declaring that the City would have made no such move without the Chancellor's sanction.

work had been strictly limited. No general measures could be attempted until the form of the rebuilding had been settled and, until that decision had been made, progress could only be piecemeal. The City seems therefore to have concentrated most of its attention on two problems, both urgent and both capable of being attended to apart from the question of lay-out. These were the provision of materials for the new buildings, and the prevention, so far as that was possible, of disputes between landlords and tenants. Enterprise and lack of scruple were typical of many of the former inhabitants and, whilst the City might look to the first to help in the provision of materials, it was determined that the second should not find an outlet in profiteering or in retarding by litigation or any other device the conclusion of agreements to rebuild.<sup>1</sup> Real control in each of these matters could only be secured by statutes devised for

<sup>1</sup> Two examples may serve to illustrate the difficulties which, in despite of all the statutory safeguards, these qualities could cause. One concerned Josiah Child, already a man of importance and later to conduct the East India Company with a vigour notable alike for the successes it obtained and the opposition it aroused, the other Humphrey Henchman, the then Bishop of London. Child coveted a part of the land of St. Botolph, Billingsgate. He therefore commanded the workmen who were engaged on the staking to stake out as his 540 square feet of the church land, 'telling the said Surveyors that the ground of severall Churches was to be disposed of and that he intended to purchase the ground of the said Church soe taken away'. The first part of his story was perfectly true, and the workmen obeyed. Child thereupon seized a public passage to the Wharf, and built on it, diverting the right of way on to the former church land. To make his offence worse, he then stopped up the right of way, putting a gate across the entrance to the passage. On the site so conveniently acquired he built sheds, probably for warehouses, which he let for between £500 and £600 per annum. The City duly went to law about it, but Child must have used every available legal device, and they were many, to defer the decision, for it was not until 1690, some twenty-five years after the offence had been committed, that the City was finally successful. (*Guildhall Recs.*, Large Suit Box No. 17).

The story of Henchman's harsh dealing is told in *Pepys's Diary*. His tenants, the booksellers, wanted to rebuild, and applied to the Bishop for his terms. He would give none until all arrears of rent had been paid, though the practice of the Fire Court was to remit those due after the Fire, provided that the tenant financed the rebuilding. The booksellers were in a quandary for, if they paid, their chief bargaining counter was gone. They threatened to go to the Fire Court in order to obtain an equitable settlement, but Parliament was sitting and, as Pepys's indignant friend declared, 'he claims his privilege and will not be cited before the Lord Chief Justice, as others are, there to be forced to a fair dealing'. The booksellers, as the Bishop well knew, had either to come to heel or wait still longer before they could return to their premises. In the meantime rebuilding was delayed, and everyone suffered. (*Diary*, January 14th, 1668.)

that specific purpose. Such statutes the City set out to obtain.

The first was the simpler problem. Materials for the rebuilding really meant bricks, tiles and lime. Timber was also required in large quantities, but that trade was well organized and used to meeting heavy demands at short notice. Native merchants could be relied upon to bring to London as much as the country could supply, and the balance would be made up from Norway and Sweden.<sup>1</sup> Should English merchants lack enterprise, the Dutch who, war or no war, were already petitioning for licences to import,<sup>2</sup> would quickly make good the deficiency. But bricks and lime were another matter. To rebuild 13,000 houses in brick as the King had commanded meant an expansion in demand without precedent in the history of London. Proposals for the erection of brick kilns began almost immediately. Evelyn was concerned in one, as Pepys was in a scheme for fetching timber,<sup>3</sup> but the City was not prepared to trust solely to unregulated private enterprise. It encouraged its tenants in the suburbs 'to digg and cast upp the . . . ground for the making of Bricke'<sup>4</sup> and it appointed a committee to treat with brickmakers, limeburners, and other undertakers for building materials,<sup>5</sup> but it also pushed forward with a Bill for 'Regulating the Making of Bricks and Tiles'. Its exact provisions are unknown, for it was later amalgamated into one great rebuilding Bill, but the preamble to the relevant clauses in the latter shows its intention clearly enough — 'to the end the . . . Builders may receive due encouragement by having the materials for building at reasonable prices'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Privy Council had issued an order on February 23rd, 1666, relaxing the Navigation Act so far as the importation of various Eastland and Norwegian products was concerned. Timber and deals were included. This order was confirmed and further extended for direct trade between Norway, Sweden and London on November 28th, 1666: (*P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, p. 221). On March 18th, 1668, the Act was suspended entirely so far as the importation into London of timber, boards, bricks and tiles was concerned: (*ibid.*, 2/60, p. 232). An individual licence was granted as early as September 12th, 1666: (*ibid.*, 2/59, pp. 155-6).

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1666-67, pp. 156 and 170.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1667, p. 67; *Pepys's Diary*, September 28th and 29th, 1666

<sup>4</sup> *Repert.*, 72, f. 6. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, f. 130.

<sup>6</sup> 18 & 19 Charles II, c. 8, s. 14.

Prices fixed by authority were part of the daily life of London, and a Bill for regulating the charges for building materials involved nothing new either in theory or in practice. But the prevention of disputes between landlord and tenant was a venture into the unknown, made additionally dangerous by the universality of the relationship which would be affected. Land had from time immemorial been regarded as the only safe investment, and corporate bodies and private individuals alike had bought lands and houses when they wished for safety of capital or security of income. In 1666 London was a city of landlords and tenants, as it had been for centuries. The City itself derived more than a quarter of its revenues from property most of which was within its own jurisdiction. The Companies, especially the great ones, and the royal hospitals were equally concerned. Ecclesiastical holdings, despite the dispersion during the Reformation, were still great, and, from wealthy St. Paul's to the humblest parish, more than a hundred churches were drawing incomes from tenants. Outside corporations, though relatively less important, increased the total and made the problem more difficult. From the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, with their great estate in St. Martin Le Grand, to Oxford and Cambridge colleges with individual houses, institutions in all parts of England were interested in London property.

Though no estimate can be made of the total of their holdings the Fire Decrees<sup>1</sup> show clearly how great was the contribution of the private owner to the aggregate held by landlords. The majority of the nobles who had formerly kept town houses had now moved west towards Whitehall and the number of outside owners of London property was small, but the citizens themselves had invested freely in it. They had bought it for revenue, and they had bought it for development. It was the investment for marriage portions, and the accepted way of providing in advance for widows. The carefully-minded

<sup>1</sup> The decisions of the court created by 18 & 19 Charles II, c. 7, to try disputes arising between landlord and tenant by reason of the Fire were so called.



acquired houses to provide an income for their old age or for their dependants, the charitably-minded left their legacies in the form of quit-rents and rent-charges. Since freeholds were few and corporations normally let at beneficial rents, some of this investing was in the form of purchases of long leases. The capital available was used to pay the fine, and sub-letting at rack rents provided a handsome return. Fresh funds, as they accumulated, might be used to buy new leases, or be laid out on extending one already in existence.<sup>1</sup> Reversions were also bought, thus securing to the purchaser a term in some property at the end of the tenure then in force. By these last and by family settlements of all kinds further complexity was added to an already complicated system of tenures. The leases and releases which were so freely used to protect wives and dependants from rogues, or fraud, or their own follies; the frequency of life interests; and the carefully secured rights of minors all added rigidity to the complexity. The whole system, moreover, was tied and secured with every precaution that legal skill could devise. Every right of the landlord was protected and every duty of the tenant defined.

When the Fire destroyed 13,000 houses, it was not therefore a burning-out of 13,000 freeholders, any more than it was the burning of property protected against such a contingency by an impregnable system of insurance.<sup>2</sup> It was not even a loss which could be confined to the owners and tenants of the burnt houses. The whole community was involved. The flames had destroyed a substantial part of the accumulated savings of generations and had wiped out most of the security behind a highly complicated system of investment.<sup>3</sup> The immediate sufferers might be

<sup>1</sup> B.M. Add. MS. 5063 gives many instances, e.g. Nos. 48, 61, 76.

<sup>2</sup> In one of the insurance offices in the present city of London a large picture of the burning of San Francisco reminds insurers that calamities can still occur, and that companies with all their assets in one place may be as hard hit by them as the clients they attempt to protect.

<sup>3</sup> After the Fire the rule-of-thumb valuation of the burnt properties gave one-third to the site and the balance to the building. The question is elaborately discussed in *The Purchaser's Pattern*, by H. Phillippes. Its fifth edition (1676) contained a special section dealing with problems arising out of the Fire.

those tenants-in-possession who were compelled to find new dwellings, but the community's share in the loss was soon apparent. Quite apart from the dislocation to its everyday life there was the severe blow to those whose incomes depended on this form of investment. Many widows and dependants, and nearly all London's charities were affected. Companies, hospitals, and parishes were the trustees for every form of almsgiving that well-disposed citizens could devise. Almost without exception they were financed from rents, and it was the source of those rents that the Fire had wiped out. The poor lost the gifts of coals and bread which usually helped them through the winter,<sup>1</sup> and the aged were deprived of their pensions. For the sick it meant a reduction in relief, for the schools the loss of their endowments. Even London Bridge was affected, for much of its income was derived from property in the city. In addition hundreds of private people were left destitute or in difficulties and petitions for help poured in upon a King and a City who were themselves among the chief sufferers.

In theory the tenants were bound to make good all these deficiencies. The ordinary lease bound the lessee to keep the premises in good repair, and allowed the landlord to eject him if he failed to do so. Normally such covenants were rigidly enforced, and, when all fortunes were impaired, few landlords would lightly depart from their strict rights. Equally, few tenants would readily accept the strict legal position if it bound them to do something which drove them near to bankruptcy. The Fire had destroyed the houses. The subject matter of the agreements had vanished. There remained only ash-covered foundations, unenforceable liabilities and a tangle of conflicting claims. Freeholder, leaseholder, sub-tenant, and quit-rent owner — they made an unmanageable team, opposed to any concessions, concerned only for their own rights. Left to themselves they would have wasted years composing their differences.

<sup>1</sup> Gifts, and the relief moneys which were collected under a royal proclamation, mitigated the losses of the destitute and the very poor until the system was working again.

From the outset, the authorities were determined to prevent this. Their aim was to ensure that the rebuilding was started as soon and carried out as smoothly as possible. If the rights of one group of private individuals threatened to cause delays, then, in the interests of the community, they would have to be curtailed.<sup>1</sup> As only legislation could provide the necessary authority Parliament had to be called in. A Bill<sup>2</sup> was drafted giving power to coerce the harsh dealer and to relieve the genuinely distressed. On October 24th it received its first reading, and on the 29th it reached the committee stage. There it was apparently found wanting, for almost immediately afterwards the judges were entrusted with the task of drafting another. On November 6th the City ordered its sheriffs to wait on them and to give them thanks for the Bill which they were preparing 'to prevent troubles and contentions betwixt the Landlords and Tenants of houses destroyed in the late dreadful fire'. An entreaty was also to be added 'to give it all dispatch . . . as a matter of principall concernment and encouragement to the great worke of rebuilding the Citty'.<sup>3</sup> Either the entreaty was strikingly effective or else the work was already far advanced, for on the 12th the sheriffs were instructed to give thanks for the Bill 'which is in all things agreeable to the Tenor and desire of this Court'.<sup>4</sup> That problem seemed to be well on its way towards settlement.

<sup>1</sup> The strict, legal liability of the tenants was altered by the persistent affirmation of a Frenchman, Robert Hubert, that he had deliberately fired the city. He was therefore tried, convicted and executed. The effect of this conviction was described to Pepys by Lord Crewe, who spoke at dinner of 'how the Judges have determined in the case whether the landlords or the tenants (who are, in their leases, all of them generally tied to maintain and uphold their houses) shall bear the losse of the Fire; and they say that the tenants should against all casualties of fire beginning either in their owne or in their neighbour's [premises]; but, where it is done by an enemy, they are not to do it. And this was done by an enemy, there having been one convicted and hanged upon this very score': (*Diary*, November 5th, 1666). Although there is no doubt that Hubert's confession was false (W. G. Bell, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-5), the conviction stood, and the tenants were saved. This robbed a measure designed to relieve hardships of all taint of discrimination against landlords as a class, and may have been the reason why the City's original Bill had to be dropped, and that of the Judges substituted.

<sup>2</sup> 'A Bill for present Prevention of Suits by Landlords against their Tenants, whose Houses were burnt in the late sad Fire.'

<sup>3</sup> *Repert.*, 72, f. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 130.

Thus, when the survey was abandoned, and it became possible to review the general question of the rebuilding, two of the issues were ready for the consideration of Parliament, and the City had made some progress towards plans for its own new buildings.<sup>1</sup> But the most difficult matters were untouched. The Commissioners had worked out regulations for the new houses, but the new streets were not decided upon, the question of church rebuilding was untouched and the problem of finding labour for so gigantic an undertaking was unsolved. No measures had been devised to stop migration, no places had been found for those noisome trades which Charles had promised to ban from the rebuilt city, and, above all, no source had been discovered for the great sums which would have to be expended if a tithe of what had been promised was to be fulfilled. The work which had been done was as nothing to the work which remained to be done.

The members of the main rebuilding committee arriving at eight o'clock on the mornings of one of the severest winters men could remember must have wondered bitterly whether their task would ever be finished. 'Constantly warned by Ticketts' they attended three times a week, struggling, with the help of counsel and artificers, to produce a plan under which London would not only be rebuilt but be made 'greater and fairer than ever before'. Despite the cold they worked hard for, on November 30th, their draft was ready for the consideration of the Common Council. How far it was there altered we cannot tell, but the fact that nineteen of the clauses form a reasonably consecutive series and that the last four have obviously been added suggests that the changes were mainly supplementary. Nor can the debate have been long, for approval was given on the same day, and orders issued for the committee to confer with counsel for the conversion of the

<sup>1</sup> Various committees were dealing with temporary repairs to the main buildings, and a special court was held each week by the Aldermen to 'devise and consider' the rebuilding of the Guildhall, gates, prisons and other public works of the city. The holding of this court was first ordered on November 6th when the organization of temporary offices, prisons and law courts had been completed.

draft into a Bill. That done, they were to 'manage and direct the prosecution of this great Affaire' so that it might be preferred to Parliament with all speed.<sup>1</sup>

The draft Bill was a curious mixture of positive reforms, prohibitions designed to help the rebuilding by hindering activities elsewhere, and matters reserved to the City's discretion. To contemporaries it was a triumph for the moderate reformers, to posterity it is a valuable example of the outlook of the times. Inspired solely by the past, it made no attempt whatsoever to anticipate the needs of the future. The changes were those which experience showed to be necessary. Most of them related to streets and to buildings, and in most instances adaptation to the changing needs of traffic was the cause. The improvements designed by the Act of 1662 were to be carried out, and the City was to decide on the remedy for less glaring faults in lay-out when the surveyors' map had been completed.<sup>2</sup> The difficulties caused to traffic by the massive conduits were to be met by giving the City power to contract them or to take them out of the high streets altogether, and the old evil of bows and jutties was to be abolished by the establishment of a regular and uniform street frontage. A bolder course was adopted for improving the system of paving. Control was to pass from the local authorities to the City itself, and with control the essential powers of supervision and taxation. A definite breach with the past, this was a landmark in the movement towards centralized control. By an obvious corollary, spouting gutters were also to be abolished. In future they were to be replaced by pipes down the sides of the houses, designed to convey the water directly into the channels in the streets.

These were all obvious remedies for long recognized faults. Evelyn was not writing as a pioneer when he declared 'That

<sup>1</sup> The draft Bill and the orders about it are to be found in *Jor.*, 46, ff. 132-4.

<sup>2</sup> The last of the clauses, which I presume to have been added in the Council, stipulated for care that alleys should be as few as possible and that such courts as were built might have cart-passage into them – this last being a significant side-light on the difficulty of disposing of semi-liquid refuse when the dirt-carts could not get near to the houses.

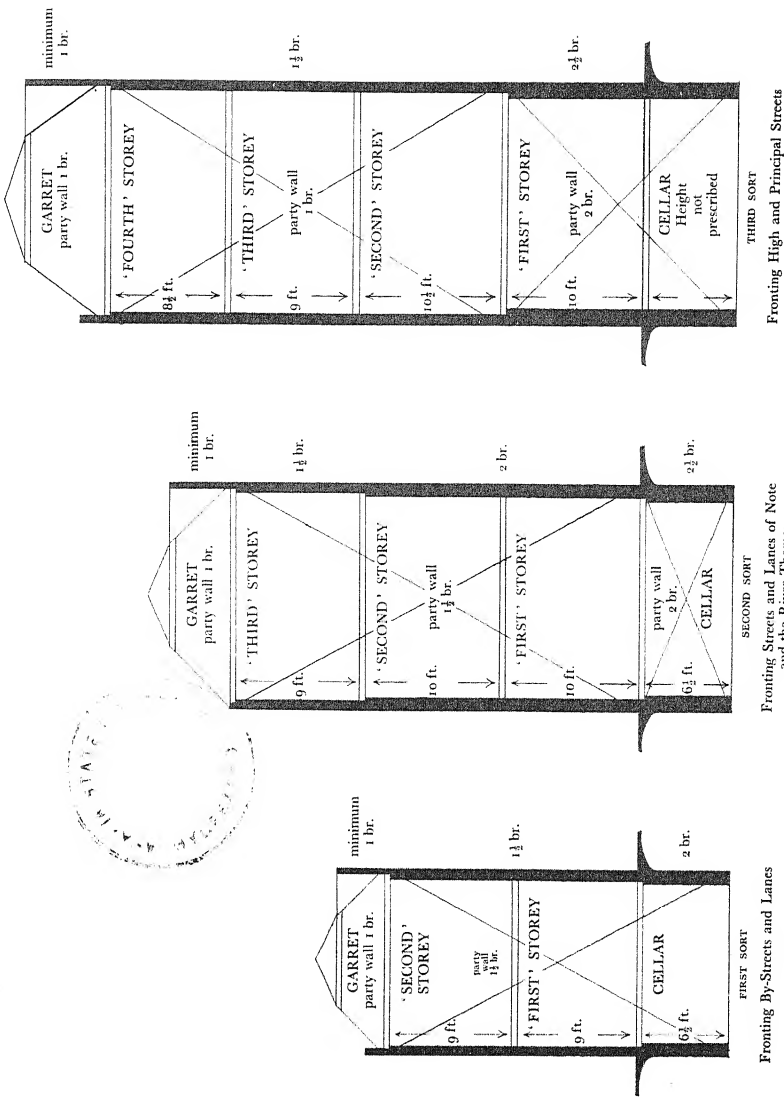
the *Streets* should be so narrow and incommodious in the very Center, and busiest places of Intercourse; That there should be so ill and uneasie a form of *Paving* under foot, so troublesome and malicious a disposure of the Spouts and Gutters overhead are particulars worthy of Reproof and Reformation'.<sup>1</sup> It was plain to any stranger that London was thereby 'rendered a *Labyrinth* in its principal passages and a continual wet day after the storm is over . . .' To be splashed from head to foot by coaches as they jolted through the puddle-filled streets was a misadventure which had overtaken most people, and there must have been many besides Lady Batten who, in 'horrible foule weather', had left a shoe or a galosh stuck fast in the mud. These failings had to be remedied, however, and it would be folly to criticize the City for unoriginality because its reforms began with something so everyday as an attack on original sin.

The most striking changes were the provisions for buildings. These again were not new,<sup>2</sup> but they were wholesale, and they were likely to be effective, and those were novelties indeed. The new city was to be of brick or stone. Wood was banned from the exteriors of the houses,<sup>3</sup> and, by a really drastic step, jerry-building was also banned. Greatly though the City desired speed in the rebuilding, it was not prepared to allow the old evils to reappear. If private initiative was left to itself, the houses would have been rebuilt as fast, but also as cheaply as possible. Cheap buildings, put up rapidly, at haphazard, without control of size or construction, would have left the new London little removed from the old. Tenements would have reappeared, and the poor would have crowded back into deep cellars and crazy attics to live as they had lived before, until

<sup>1</sup> *Fumifugium*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> Building regulations of various kinds had existed in London for centuries. The Stuarts had intensified them, though without much success, as is shown by a comparison of the terms of Charles I's proclamation of July 16th, 1630, with that of his son on August 16th, 1661: (both are calendared by R. Steele, *op. cit.*).

<sup>3</sup> Except for the bressummers, and modifications necessary for shops. Oak timber might be used in such cases, but its scarcity and prohibitive price would keep this down to a minimum.



### SECTIONS OF HOUSES AUTHORIZED BY THE REBUILDING ACT OF 1667

No corresponding schedule was prescribed for 'Mansion houses . . . of the greatest bignes not fronting upon any of the Streets or Lanes. . . .'  
 The relevant clauses in the Act do not always agree with the schedule and scantlings appended to it. As the latter were probably accepted they have been used for these diagrams.

dirt and overcrowding once again bred a plague and sent the pest-cart on its dreaded passage through half-deserted streets. The authorities took the only possible means of preventing this when they insisted on the building of standard houses. One type might be built in by-streets, a larger in high streets.<sup>1</sup> The heights, storeys, thickness of walls and depth of cellars were all prescribed, and scantlings laid down for the wood-work. Fines were to be appointed for infringements, and most important of all, 'knowing and intelligent persons in buildings' were to be appointed to watch for them. Without such inspectors the scheme might have been as farcical as the laws against building in the suburbs; with them there was some hope of its being carried out.

The housing clauses had evidently been drawn up by the Commissioners. Nobody could quarrel with their provisions, and they reappeared almost unaltered in the Rebuilding Act. Nor could fault be found with two others designed to facilitate rebuilding, which also passed substantially unaltered into the Act. The first made it obligatory for party walls to be set out equally on each owner's ground and for the first builder of the two to build the complete wall, leaving toothing for the next house to be joined. When the second owner came to build, he was to pay half the cost of the wall with six per cent interest thereon for the intervening period. This rendered it unnecessary for each house to wait until the owner of every other house in the block was ready to begin, and yet gave the first venturer authority to enforce contribution from the laggards. It was valuable and apparently readily used, as was a second which aimed at reducing the inevitable disputes about lights, windows, gutters and channels for water, by giving the ward authorities power to deal with them, subject only to an appeal to the final decision of the Mayor and Aldermen. By these means protracted litigation in courts which had no local knowledge was

<sup>1</sup> For houses which had no street frontage (e.g. those in courts) greater discretion was left to the builder, but here too the main rules about construction had to be observed.



successfully avoided, though at the cost of endless worry and trouble to the unfortunate Court of Aldermen.<sup>1</sup>

Three further proposals and a penalty for those moving surveyors' marks brought the reforms to an end. To prevent the recurrent damage caused by the river flooding at spring tides, the City was to have power to cause the level of the wharves to be raised by a maximum of three feet; they were to be authorized to appoint Commissioners of Sewers, with powers of levying rates, to deal with a problem which had long been pressing; and dangerous or offensive trades were to be removed from the high streets. Added to the other measures they made a useful, if unambitious, list of improvements. Much would depend on the action taken under the discretionary clauses, but if the conduits were removed, the wharves raised, the streets properly paved, and the water from houses, markets and streets carried away in adequate drains, then the new London would be to the old what a well-reconditioned house is to its tumble-down predecessor. If, in addition, appreciable street widening was carried out, then the reformers would have substantial cause to congratulate themselves.

Intermixed with these clauses were those which the City thought to be necessary for the furtherance of the building. First, and it was also the first in the Bill, 'That there be noe Building upon new Foundations within five Miles of London at any time hereafter'.<sup>2</sup> It would be really interesting to know whether the City genuinely put any trust in this measure. From its first appearance in Elizabeth's reign it had had a consistent record of failure. One minute's comparison of the Elizabethan map attributed to Ralph Aggas, with that produced by Newcourt and Faithorne in 1658<sup>3</sup> could have shown

<sup>1</sup> Starting with a small number in 1667, they increased rapidly in 1668. In 1669, together with Orphans' business, they occupied more than half the space in the Repertory. During 1670 they declined somewhat, but remained a constant source of trouble for several years more.

<sup>2</sup> Linked with it was a provision against converting other buildings into dwelling houses.

<sup>3</sup> 'An exact delineation of ye Cities of London and Westminster, and ye Suburbs thereof, together with ye Burrough of Southwark', published in 1658, but compiled in part from earlier material.

that under its would-be restricting influence the suburbs had flourished and grown great. Yet, in spite of its many times proven ineffectiveness, it had again been chosen, and chosen at a moment when there was a vital need for trustworthy weapons. It was followed by another in the same strain: 'That all Buildings upon new Foundations in all parts of this kingdom (this City and Liberties excepted) be prohibited for the Terme of seaven yeares unlesse the City be sooner fully rebuilt.' This however was not a measure to restrict and to prevent competition from the suburbs, but was the City's attempt to solve the problem of labour, for it added 'the better to procure workemen hither'. It was a subordination of the needs of the rest of England to those of London which would have been less arrogant if it had embodied some concession to those who came to do the work. They, however, were apparently to stay until London was rebuilt and then to pack up their belongings and return with their families whence they had come. Their own towns must do without them as best they could until London ceased to have need of them; then they could go back and find houses and work if any were available. It is not surprising that Parliament rejected the clause, lopped off the prohibition and, in order to attract labour, offered substantial inducements to it to come.

The final 'clause in aid' was a measure to prevent migration. Strongly traditional in its method, it carried tradition to the furthest limits it had yet reached in an effort to compel all those who made a livelihood by trading in London to contribute their share to its government. Here one can have much sympathy with the City. By long tradition it was obligatory for all citizens either to take up office when elected or else to pay a substantial fine in lieu of so doing. Aldermen and Common Councilmen carried out, unpaid, duties which went far further than the periodical meetings of their modern representatives. They were expected to know all about the life of their districts and to see that it was carried on in accordance with the rules laid down by the City. In the absence of almost every administrative

official known to the present day, their task extended from the prevention of day to day abuses of the laws of the city and of good-neighbourliness to the appointment and supervision of such persons as might be specially required for the collection of a tax or the holding of an inquiry. It was hard work, so hard that the number of those willing to pay £400 to avoid it had grown great, and their fines an important part of the City's revenue.<sup>1</sup> Those who were doing it and those who had paid substantially to escape it very naturally objected to meeting on the Exchange or at the Custom House men who were engaged in the same trade as themselves and enjoying the same facilities, and who were no more than paid agents of some person who, living a few miles away, drew all the benefits and bore none of the burdens. This feeling, combining with the genuine need to prevent a heavy recruitment of the ranks of the out-dwellers from those of 'burnt' citizens seeking houses in the suburbs, led to the severest restrictions yet suggested.<sup>2</sup> If the City could have its way, no migrating citizen would escape, and no merchant within twenty miles would evade liabilities if he derived benefits from activities in London.

At the beginning of December, twelve weeks after the Fire, the City's programme for the rebuilding was contained in these three Bills. Its private programme — the plans for its own buildings — was as yet scarcely touched. Broadly it would have to be one of reconstruction as funds permitted, but fuller details were impossible until an estimate could be made of the money which would be available. All attempted estimates showed that the City's own unsupplemented income could not meet such a demand. Help had therefore to be obtained in some form from outside. The special weekly meeting of the Court of Aldermen which was considering the programme was also considering means of 'raising or obteyning some revenue

<sup>1</sup> During the five months from April to September 1667, twenty-three people paid fines to avoid the office of alderman, the sums amounting to just over £400 apiece. This was admittedly an exceptional time, but the aggregate of the fines paid during the eight years 1659-66 was £30,109, and a full £5000 more was outstanding.

<sup>2</sup> See the summary of the provisions given on p. 47 above.

to carry on the same'. No long discussion was needed before 'raising' was put aside as impossible, but to 'obteyn' was almost as difficult. No grant-in-aid could be expected, no direct tax was possible, and yet £100,000 was required, and required within five years at the furthest. The only possible method was that of an indirect tax on some commodity entering the port of London. Although this would have the disadvantage of bearing on the 'burnt' citizens, the port served a large area, so that many others would be included, and the City would be able to use its own machinery, within its own jurisdiction. If the rest of the country would not help, this was the widest alternative available.

The choice of the commodity was simple. It could only be coal, for it had every advantage. Already taxed, and already metaged,<sup>1</sup> little extra administrative machinery would be needed. Imported in large quantities,<sup>2</sup> and used by everyone, the revenue would be adequate and there would be no discrimination. Evasion was impossible for there was no substitute, and bulk precluded smuggling. Fraud could not be ruled out, but without collaboration between several distinct interests that too would be difficult. The Aldermen's decision to use it to raise the necessary funds seems to have been made at their first meeting, and two days later the draft Bill was ready and approved.<sup>3</sup> Orders were given for the Solicitor-General to be consulted, and by the beginning of December it was ready for presentation to Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Before coal could be sold by the shippers to ordinary purchasers or to the wood-mongers who distributed it in London the amount of each cargo in tons or chaldrons had to be measured by officials known as the Coal Meters. By 1666 the system was an anachronism, so far as its original purpose of protecting the buyer against short weight was concerned, but it was retained and was essential to the collection of the duties already existing on coal. It made it extremely simple to check the returns of the collectors of any new tax.

<sup>2</sup> There are no figures available for the 1660s, but in the 1680s some 350,000 tons per annum were being received at the port of London: (J. U. Nef, *The Rise of the British Coal Industry* (1932), II, p. 381).

<sup>3</sup> *Repert.*, 72, f. 8.

<sup>4</sup> On December 4th the Sheriffs were instructed to present it to the Lord Chancellor with a request that he would do his best to further it: (*Repert.*, 72, f. 20).

Its programme completed, the City directed its energies to getting it accepted. During the next ten weeks its opportunities caused Charles to drive Parliament to take definite action, and the rebuilding was, for the first time, worked upon by all parties.<sup>1</sup> Even so, the position was precarious, for the Commons grudged all time taken from their discussion of the raising and spending of money for the administration,<sup>2</sup> and only knowledge of London's needs kept Charles from ending the session. The work was hurried, and it suffered in consequence, but it did provide a means whereby the rebuilding might begin. Though opportunities were missed, more would certainly have been lost if the delay had been longer continued. As it was, the final decisions were not completed until May, and rebuilding was then in full swing.

No records of the debates on the various bills have survived, and few of the progress of the negotiations, but it is clear that all — Commissioners, City, Judges, Privy Council, and Parliament — contributed something to the final results. Both the main Bills, indeed, had stormy passages and, in the Lords, the Earl of Dover went to the length of recording in the *Journals* his dissent to each of them. The progress of the measures can best be followed from the city. There, doubts and fears were always being recorded, and the interest was continuous: elsewhere other matters intruded, and the information set down was small.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, since it was incumbent on the City to

<sup>1</sup> Except the ecclesiastical authorities who could come to no decision about the churches to be discontinued. It was commonly agreed that all the burnt churches could not be rebuilt, but there the agreement ended. The various patrons had no wish to see their respective churches suppressed, and it was not easy to bring them to agree, or to accommodate their decisions with the intense feeling displayed by each parish against the loss of its separate church. On November 30th a deputation from the City had been instructed to wait on the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London to consider the question (*For.*, 46, f. 133v), and three months later, the ecclesiastical authorities had still not given their decision: (*ibid.*, f. 146). Finally the matter had to remain over until the second Rebuilding Act.

<sup>2</sup> They were also very much occupied with the business of impeaching Viscount Mordaunt.

<sup>3</sup> The *Journals* of both the Houses and the Registers of the Privy Council are all most disappointing in this respect. Milward's diary adds something, but still leaves a very incomplete picture.

obtain the assent of the Chancellor, as head of the Council Re-building Committee, to its proposals for legislation, its records do something to fill the gaps in those of the Council.

During the first fortnight in December the City was busy putting the final touches to its great Bill, whilst the Commons, having given two readings to that for the Fire Court, were uninterestedly allowing it to lapse in its committee stage. On the fifteenth, however, Charles intervened with a message calling the attention of the House to the urgent need to press on with the new taxes and with the Bills then outstanding. Added to it was an announcement that there would be no adjournment until the work was finished, and that the Christmas recess would be limited to the chief festival days.<sup>1</sup> This stimulated the Commons to immediate action, and the prospects of the City's Bill, now ready for presentation,<sup>2</sup> were visibly brightened. The Bill for the Fire Court passed with some amendments and was sent to the Lords on the 20th and the way seemed to be clear for the second and greater measure. Then the City committed a grave indiscretion. Alarmed by a rumour that Parliament was about to rise so that the members might execute the Poll Bill in their respective counties, it sent urgent orders to the London M.P.s to present its draft at once. At this everyone took offence. The draft had not been sanctioned, and exception was immediately taken to the clause reserving to the City the decision as to which streets should be widened and by how much. Apologies had to be sent with all possible haste to the Chancellor and to Parliament, and the most humble excuses to the King.<sup>3</sup> Probably little real harm was done, but the City was shown with emphasis that it was not a master in its own house,<sup>4</sup> and the contretemps momentarily damped men's spirits. Pepys, summing up at the end of the year, noted

<sup>1</sup> *Commons' Journals*, VIII, p. 663a.

<sup>2</sup> It received the final assent of the Common Council together with orders for its presentation to Parliament on the day of the King's message: (*Jor.*, 46, f. 135).

<sup>3</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 135.

<sup>4</sup> The final Act took pains to lay down that the consent of the King was necessary to decisions under the chief discretionary clause, and the City was most careful not to err again.

gloomily: 'The City less and less likely to be built again, every body settling elsewhere, and nobody encouraged to trade.'<sup>1</sup>

His pessimism was unjustified. In the New Year progress was as rapid as it had previously been slow. The Lords gave searching attention to the matter of the Fire Court,<sup>2</sup> and the Commons made reasonable advances in their consideration of the general Bill. When mounting difficulties and severely controversial matters threatened to cause fresh delays, and the Commons left rebuilding for the more exciting impeachment of Viscount Mordaunt, Charles came to the rescue. On January 26th he sent another reminder to them, stressing the urgent need for a settlement of London's affairs.<sup>3</sup> It was effective. From thenceforward the Commons gave full attention to the rebuilding. Agreement seems to have been difficult, but urgency was a valuable solvent. The general Bill was discussed at session after session and, on February 5th, it passed its third reading. The Lords made amendments but caused no delay. On the 7th both Bills were ready for the royal assent. On the 8th it was given, and Charles prorogued the Houses. Nor were the results seriously marred by such haste. All the parties concerned had left their mark on the Bills,<sup>4</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> *Diary*, December 31st, 1666.

<sup>2</sup> The members to whom it had been committed asked for the attendance of representatives of the City to answer questions as they arose, and then called for the assistance of the Attorney General and some of the Judges. The greatest controversy arose, however, over the matter of appeals. The Bill allowed none except to a larger body from the same court. After the committee had reported that the Bill was fit to pass it was recommitted with directions to consider how provision could be made for an appeal to the House of Lords. Finally a long debate took place on this question, and a motion to add such a clause was only defeated by a narrow margin. Of the sixty-four who were present at the session, no less than twenty-nine desired leave to enter their protestation in the event of the motion being lost. The feeling engendered was evidently strong, for two of the members at the third reading desired to enter their protestations, and the Earl of Dover entered his dissent 'By reason of the unlimited and unbounded Power given to the Judges in this Bill without any Appeal': (*Lords' Journals*, xii, pp. 86-7). The Commons, with no question of jurisdiction at stake, were more easily satisfied.

<sup>3</sup> *Commons' Journals*, viii, p. 684a.

<sup>4</sup> It is impossible to assign most of the alterations to their authors. The Chancellor made additions, for the City desired him to send copies of them for its perusal (*For.*, 46, f. 137), and the City itself made several. Its committees were hard at work during January on the question of street-widening, and on the 19th a list was drawn up, very



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representatives of the City had had a gruelling time answering the questions of and supplying information to the members, but the Fire Court gave the highest satisfaction, and the machinery of the Rebuilding Act worked as well as could be expected in so unprecedented a situation. There were deficiencies and there was a lack of foresight, but the position might have been very much worse. With no Parliament to worry about the City was left to take stock and to test the strength and merits of the equipment with which it had been endowed. Much remained to be decided, and negotiations

much on the lines of that agreed with the Council on October 24th, but without widths and without any of the less important streets. This was submitted to the Chancellor with a request for his opinion and advice and for guidance as to how to proceed so that it might be included in the Bill. Since widths were not specified and since other streets might need to be widened, a proviso was added giving the City powers in the matter, subject to the King's consent: (*Jor.*, 46, f. 141). The clause was altered before insertion – by whom I do not know – but after long debate (*Milward's Diary*, pp. 72-7), the substance of it appeared in the Act.

The Commons must have made many changes, and one important addition can be directly traced to them – the clause for encouraging workmen to come in from the rest of England to help with the rebuilding: (*Jor.*, 46, f. 138). This clear-sighted innovation not only served its immediate purpose, but also provided London with many new citizens to help with the repeopling.

At some stage the provisions of the former Bill for regulating the manufacture of bricks were added to the general Act, and at the end of January provision was at long last made for financing the improvements and some of the City's own buildings. So late as January 22nd, the King had been petitioned for leave to bring in a Bill imposing a tax on coals for the benefit of the City's buildings only: (*Repert.*, 72, f. 43v). His consent was given, and that of the Commons followed on the 23rd. On January 28th and February 1st, however, the whole house, in committee, was considering a clause in the general Bill to serve this purpose. Finally the latter method was adopted, and the unfortunate City was left with the miserable remnant thus provided. It can have given them little satisfaction for the money was assigned firstly for the purchase of the ground required for widening the streets, and only the residue was left to satisfy claims for the land taken for Fleet Ditch and the Thames Quay. Out of that residue the prisons could be rebuilt, but no provision whatsoever was made for the rest of the City's buildings.

The Lords made amendments, though they had a bare two days to do so, and the Earl of Dover, defending his principles to the last, entered another dissent – against 'the exorbitant and unlimited Powers given . . . to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, to give away or dispose of the Propriety of the Landlords': (*Lords' Journals*, XII, p. 105b). Evidently Gwynn's trumped-up accusation might have been made against others besides citizens. Finally Charles forced the inclusion of clauses about the rebuilding of the burnt churches: (*Commons' Journals*, VIII, p. 688b). It was not the least of his services to an Act which owed its very existence to his firm pressure.

## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

with the Council were not completed for several months, but the first stage had been passed. The authority given was for many purposes insufficient, but it was sufficient for a start to be made, once the widths of the streets had been settled. The Commons, moving little from their attitude four months earlier, had accepted proposals designed to help the pace of the rebuilding, but had left to the King and to the City the task of prescribing all but the broad outlines of the improvements. This task was to occupy them for the next three months.

#### CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRE COURT

‘The rebuilding of the Citty will not bee soe difficult as the satisfying all interests, there being so many proprietors.’ *Sir Nathaniel Hobart*, Master in Chancery.

‘WHEREAS the greatest part of the Houses in the Citty of London and some in the Suburbs thereof have beene burnt by the dreadfull and dismall Fire which happened in September last Many of the Tennants Under tennants or late Occupiers whereof are lyeable unto Suites and Actions to compell them to repaire and rebuild the same and to pay their Rents as if the same had not beene burned and are not releiveable therein in any ordinary course of Law and great Differences are like to arise concerning the said Repaires and new Building of the said Houses and payment of Rents which if they should not be determined with all speede and without change would much obstruct the rebuilding of the said Citty. And for that it is just that every one concerned should beare a proportionable share of the losse according to their severall Interests wherein in respect of the multitude of cases varying in their circumstances noe certaine generall rule can be prescribed Bee it therefore enacted . . .’ So ran the preamble to the Act ‘For Erecting a Judicature for Determination of Differences touching Houses Burned or Demolished by reason of the late Fire which happened in London’.<sup>1</sup> The reason and the purposes for which the Court was created could hardly be expressed more clearly. Thanks to the Judges who conducted it, it became the most valuable of the means given to the City by Parliament to help on the rebuilding. Thrice prolonged, with an enlargement of

<sup>1</sup> 18 & 19 Charles II, c. 7.

jurisdiction on each occasion,<sup>1</sup> it carried out a most difficult task with universal approval.<sup>2</sup> How difficult it was may still be estimated, for the decisions survive,<sup>3</sup> records of long hours at Clifford's Inn striving in a maze of claim and counter-claim for equity and for the well-being of the city.

But, if equity was sought, it was often an equity of compensation. Roger North, writing with the experience of this calamity in mind, set out the principle which determined many of the decisions embodied in the judgments. 'When cities are burnt and the good of the whole depends upon the restoration by building, it is just by laws to compel men to despatch, or yield up their interest to who will.'<sup>4</sup> The judges worked always with that in mind. Often they had only to provide an equitable settlement between two parties in dispute about terms to govern a rebuilding, but in many cases they were called upon to cancel a lease because of a tenant's inability to find the money with which to build. On such occasions, if the tenant could not or would not rebuild, his lease was always voided and only the question of just compensation remained. Unfortunately for the Judges, however, few of the problems before them could be reduced to such simple terms. The number of the separate interests in many of the properties, and the complications involved by their use as an investment for funds demanding specially safe security, combined to make the

<sup>1</sup> It was created, in the first instance, until December 31st, 1668. Then, owing to the delays in passing the second Act, it lapsed. The second Rebuilding Act, 22 Charles II, c. 11, revived it and extended its duration until September 29th, 1671. Another year was added by 22 & 23 Charles II, c. 14, and it was again revived by 25 Charles II, c. 10, which received the royal assent on March 29th, 1673. This last carried it until February 25th, 1676, by which time it was sitting at long intervals and then deciding batches of cases. Its jurisdiction and powers were also increased.

<sup>2</sup> It was so successful that it was twice copied during the next ten years – for Northampton by 27 Charles II, c. 1, and for Southwark by 29 Charles II, c. 4.

<sup>3</sup> The engrossed copies are in the Records Department at the Guildhall. Beautifully written, they have an index of the individual cases, and may therefore be consulted with ease. The originals in the British Museum – Add. MSS. 5063-5103 – are also indexed (Add. MS. 14331). This index gives details of the parties concerned, and the name and place of the property in dispute, but as it is in chronological order it is difficult to use. The order in the two sets of records is not quite the same.

<sup>4</sup> *The Autobiography of the Honourable Roger North*, ed. A. Jessopp (1887), pp. 49-50.

recitals of the claims brought before them cover all too many pages.

Fortunately for the Court it was well-equipped for its task by a statute for which its members had themselves been largely responsible. Clearly and comprehensively drawn,<sup>1</sup> the Act provided that any three, or more, of the Judges of the Courts of King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer could decide 'all Differences and Demands whatsoever . . . betweene Landlords Proprietors Tennants Lessees Under Tennants or late Occupiers' of the buildings or ground concerned, 'or any person or persons haveing or claiming any Estate Right Title Interest in Law or Equity or Trust Charge or Incumbrance of or in the same', or persons deriving title from them or any other persons, 'touching . . . the repaireing building or rebuilding' of the property; the 'payment defalcation apportioning or abatement' of rents therefor; and 'any Covenant Condition or Penalty relating thereunto'. The competence of the Court's powers was therefore ample. All the necessary persons, interests and properties were within its scope. But, since one of the chief reasons for its existence was to hasten the rebuilding, wide powers were given for that specific purpose. In their decrees the Judges could lay down the time that repairs, rebuilding, or new building were to take, and the contribution to be made towards them by all the parties interested; they could order<sup>2</sup> the surrender, increase, curtailment, or charging of estates in the property, and the making of new leases or estates<sup>3</sup> by proprietors to those holding from them, at such rents and fines as the Court thought fit. Their orders were binding on all the persons and interests

<sup>1</sup> With experience minor alterations were made. Provisions were added, for example, covering cases in which one or more of the interested parties could not be found, and giving extra protection to the title of those building in accordance with the court's decrees: (22 Charles II, c. 11, ss. 22, 26, 27). But in general nine years' work showed no flaws in the original Act, and the tendency was always to add, rather than to subtract from its jurisdiction.

<sup>2</sup> Subject to the laws forbidding the diminishing of ancient and accustomed rents.

<sup>3</sup> Up to a maximum increase of 40 years. This was amended by s. 18 of 22 Charles II, c. 11, so that the total term to come should not exceed 60 years.

concerned, including infants, tenants in tail, corporations and ecclesiastical persons. Most important of all, none of the delays so familiar to Stuart litigants was to be allowed to impede the course of their work. A summons for attendance could be issued on complaint being made by any person interested, and on appearance the Court could proceed at once. In cases of default, the Court was not barred if oath could be made that due notice had been given. The proceedings once begun, the formalities of the procedure in the ordinary courts of law were dispensed with. The Judges could make use of whatever methods they pleased. Their jurisdiction was summary and their orders binding. They were freed from the hoary and all too often used devices of the procrastinator: 'Nor shall any Writ of Error or Certiorari lye for the removall or reversall of the same.' That clause alone must have been to many like the first glimpse of Ararat amongst the all-surrounding waste of the waters. Even appeals were forbidden except to a larger body of the same Court.<sup>1</sup> Nor could litigants complain on the score of expense. The Judges drew no fees,<sup>2</sup> and those to be paid to the officers of the Court were to be drawn up by the Court itself with the proviso that they were to be such 'as may carry on and effect the purporte and intent of this Act'.

If, after such care, the Court had proved a failure, London would not have deserved to be rebuilt. In fact, it had the greatest possible success. The City began at once to fit Clifford's Inn to serve for its premises,<sup>3</sup> the Judges went on circuit singly,

<sup>1</sup> Orders by less than seven Judges could be appealed against on exception if tendered within seven days. If seven or more of the Judges on hearing the parties and examining the exceptions found probable cause of complaint, then seven or more of them had, within twenty days of the delivery of the exceptions, to review the order.

<sup>2</sup> In view of the difficulty and the amount of the work involved this was a most generous offer on their part. That it was so esteemed may be concluded by the special reference made to it in the Speaker's address at the prorogation: 'Though, I persuade myself, no Englishman would be exempted from making some offer to carry on this pious undertaking [the rebuilding], yet the exemplary charity of your majesty's 12 reverend Judges is fit with honour to be mentioned before your majesty.' There followed a description of the work they were going to do: (William Cobbett, *The Parliamentary History of England*, IV (1808), pp. 358-9).

<sup>3</sup> They spent £120 3s. od. on it. See *Repert.*, 72, f. 79, for the order to the Chamberlain to pay it.

## THE FIRE COURT

so that the remainder of them might stay to help London,<sup>1</sup> and, only nineteen days after the passage of the Act, the first batch of judgments was given.

At the risk of interrupting the City's stock-taking, it seems worth while stopping for a moment to watch the work of the Court and to find out how it so completely won the confidence of the citizens. Remember all the time that it was totally and joyfully novel to them. Its procedure was simple. Unlike other courts it demanded few fees and wasted no time. The plaintiff had not to prepare an elaborate pleading tricked out with complicated verbal formulae. He could, and often did, conduct his case in person. 'Mr. — being counsel for the plaintiff'<sup>2</sup> may frequently appear in the records, but 'the plaintiff being present in court in person, did declare ...' is an entry with which one soon becomes familiar. Nor were the dice loaded against such a man. Nobody was allowed to try to trip him up or to draw him into time-wasting asides. If he presented his facts as clearly as he knew how, and honestly declared his purpose, the Court was well satisfied. Nor, if his opponent was refractory or deliberately obstructive, was he troubled with dark possibilities of delay or unbearable expense. The worst that he had to fear was the loss of a morning whilst the Judges made suggestions and tried to bring the recalcitrant to reason. Then, if suggestions and reasoning failed, the case was delayed no longer. The Court had powers specially designed to enable it to deal with such persons, and it was not afraid to use them. With the facts before them the Judges made their decree, and the shifts of the defendant were at an end. The plaintiff had nothing further to fear. The defendant could appeal, but, if the facts had been correctly given, there was no likelihood of the judgment being reversed. Actually that course was rarely taken. Even in the early months, before the Court's procedure had grown familiar, appeals were seldom ventured upon. Seventy decisions were given between February 27th and May

<sup>1</sup> News Letter, February 14th, 1667, in *Cal. S. P. Dom.*, 1666-67, p. 514.

<sup>2</sup> I have substituted the more modern term for the 'petitioner' always used by the Court.

8th, 1667, and only four appeals were made from them. None of them were allowed, and in three cases the Court gave costs against the appellants, plainly considering that they had been factious.<sup>1</sup> In later years they became even rarer, but the result remained the same. From June 1673 to February 1676 not a single appeal was successful. With reasonable fortune the litigant could expect that his case would be finished in a few hours. If many people were involved and the interests complicated, it might take a whole day. Sometimes there was a preliminary hearing, and a continuation on another day, but the instances were rare. Never was there anything approaching the long-drawn-out proceedings which were so common in the ordinary courts.

The cases themselves varied widely. Sometimes the Court found both sides ready to rebuild, but neither prepared to accept the terms offered by the other. Then its task was simply to induce the parties to come to an accommodation, the difficulties and the length of the proceedings varying according to the obstinacy of those concerned.<sup>2</sup> A much larger class contained landlords suing tenants who would neither agree to rebuild nor to surrender their leases, and tenants who were unable to obtain reasonable terms from their landlords. In these cases one side had already made offers which were duly recited in the petition. If they were reasonable, after establishing the facts, the Court would use them as a basis for suggestions. Generally this method was successful, sometimes quickly,

<sup>1</sup> Original cases: Thomas Boylston *v.* Thomas Cressey (No. 5); appeal No. 42. John Hamond *v.* Haberdashers' Company (No. 37); appeal No. 117. Anthony Selby *v.* Elizabeth Robinson and another (No. 48); appeal No. 116. Sir Charles Doe *v.* William Knight (No. 69); appeal No. 115. The appellants were Cressey, Hamond, Selby and Doe. Costs were given against each of the first three. Add. MS. 5063 contains five of the cases, and Add. MS. 5064, Nos. 115-17. To avoid complexity I have not given the full styles of all the parties concerned, but have, in all references to cases before this Court, confined the particulars to those sufficient to identify them in one set of decrees. In most instances I have given the references for both sets. Identifications are always difficult, but it seems probable that Hamond and Selby were the pair which displayed such tenacity in the Mincing Lane affair (see p. 145 *et seq.*).

<sup>2</sup> B.M., Add. MS. 5063, Nos. 18, 20, 21, 23, 24 (Joseph Drake *v.* Samuell Howard; and Sir William Cowper, Bart., *v.* William Hinton, John Young, William Butler, and Thomas Smyth respectively).



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sometimes after a regular set-to of bargaining and counter-bargaining, with the Court watchfully easing the way towards an accommodation. Indeed case after case adds strength to the impression that the Court regularly acted as a wise counsellor, guiding the well-disposed to a reasonable settlement, and influencing even the most obstinate into a moderation which may have surprised them when they found themselves once more in the street outside.

The terms of the settlements necessarily varied with the terms of the leases. If a tenant had recently laid out a heavy fine for a long lease at a low rent he was entitled to more consideration than if he held only the end of a lease at a beneficial rent, but the general principles were always the same. If the tenant rebuilt, his expenditure was treated as the equivalent of a fine, and his lease was correspondingly extended.<sup>1</sup> If this did not give him a sufficient recompense, his rent could be reduced as well.<sup>2</sup> In either case, his landlord was getting something done for him which he was unable to do for himself, at a time when unbuilt sites were almost unsaleable. If the tenant refused to rebuild, or if he was anxious not to, he could have his lease cancelled and receive some measure of compensation for the sums he had spent. This freed the landlord from an obstinate and perhaps indigent tenant and, in lieu of the possibly unenforceable obligation of that tenant to rebuild, allowed him either to rebuild himself or to offer good terms to someone else, without fears of a challenge from an unextinguished interest.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MS. 5063, Nos. 33, 49, 51-6, 76 (Richard Collins, gent., *v.* Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Christ, Oxford; Thomas Malcher, John Saunders, Mary Wydnell, Thomas Bayly, John Wise, Edward Marshall, John Daulinge, respectively *v.* Sir Harbottle Grimston, Bart., Master of the Rolls; Charles Pitfield, Esq., *v.* J. Crowther, D.D., Precentor of St. Paul's Cathedral).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 14, 38, 73 (Thomas Rives *v.* Thomas Meriton, Rector of St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, and the Churchwardens of the Parish; Peter Pickering *v.* Rector and Churchwardens of St. Michael's at Querne; Richard Arnold *v.* Rector and Churchwardens of St. Margaret Patten's).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 6 (Elizabeth Guy *v.* James Marshall); 41 (Sir Thomas Dacres, Knight, *v.* Elizabeth Lovell and Robert Hollis). As an unreasonable refusal to accept either a fair offer to cover rebuilding, or adequate compensation for surrendering the lease, might lead to a cancellation without recompense, the tenant was not encouraged to be too grasping: (No. 13, John Beale *v.* Sir George Moore, Bart.).

Where a rack rent had been paid, the position was not substantially different from that discussed above. The same extensions would be given to a tenant who was prepared to rebuild and the same concessions could be made in his rent. But, if the tenant refused to contribute towards rebuilding and the lease had therefore to be cancelled, or if he asked to have it cancelled by agreement, he would have to pay compensation to his landlord as the latter had no unexpended part of a fine to set off against his loss by the breach of the tenancy.<sup>1</sup>

The cases so far cited have been comparatively straightforward, and, though the Court always helped with suggestions, its contribution to each decision was probably less valuable than the possibility of obtaining that decision. For such cases, its worth lay more in its existence than in the legal skill or the ingenuity of its judgments—in the readiness with which either landlord or tenant could obtain redress through its decrees, if he was unable to obtain it by negotiation. Indeed it is very probable that, in spite of the many cases which it actually decided, there lay concealed behind them an even greater contribution to London's rebuilding—a mass of disputes which were quickly and reasonably settled without litigation because the threat of recourse to the Fire Court was sufficient.

But, besides these comparatively straightforward cases, there were many which were brought before the Court largely because of their complications. Here again, the standard of legal skill required might not be abnormal, but clear thinking and much ingenuity were essential. Where the ownership or the interests concerned were so involved that settlement was genuinely difficult, either technically or because agreement amongst so many was impossible, then one or more of the parties would take the matter to the Court. Such a case was that of the waterworks at London Bridge. Built in the 1580s

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MS. 5063, Nos. 10 (Isaack Hodgkin v. Joseph Saxton); 40 (Daniell Andrews, Esq., v. Sir Richard Piggott, Knight, Periant Trott, Esq., and Humfrey Beane, Esq.); 47 (John Austen v. Thomas King). In each of the first two the tenant had settled elsewhere, in one case having had to pay a great fine to obtain accommodation.

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by Peter Morris, a 'Dutchman', it had proved a highly profitable undertaking and had been bequeathed as such by the builder to his family. As family management was difficult where so many were concerned, the business was settled in 1659 on Trustees, subject to the payment to the settlors of certain sums annually 'out of the Rente and proffitte'. The Fire destroyed the waterworks and the whole structure of the trust, for Thomas Morris the appointed payee and, subject to the trust, the actual owner not only stopped the payments whilst the buildings were in ashes, but also refused either to build himself or to encourage others to do so. The resultant deadlock was broken by one of the parties bringing the case to the Fire Court. By reason of the numbers concerned and the inter-complication of their interests, the Court decided that an estimate of the cost of rebuilding would have to be obtained before any progress could be made. With definite figures available, it resumed the hearing and sought for a party willing to rebuild, emerging from the conflict of disputes and offers with a builder to be reimbursed out of the profits which the concern could not fail to make, a body of three trustees to run it under the protection of a lease and of the surrender of all the interests in the trust of 1659, the surrenderers compensated with their old annual payments, and the recalcitrant Thomas Morris coming back into the management again at the end of twenty-one years.<sup>1</sup> It was a remarkable tribute to the ability of the Court. At the outset a solution had seemed impossible, and at the finish all parties were in consent. It was also a most important gain for the rebuilding. Adequate supplies of water were essential to the construction of the new houses, and to their inhabitants when they were completed, and there was no alternative supply.<sup>2</sup>

For work of that kind the Court could not have been bettered. Without rancour, without partiality, with regard for essentials

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MS. 5063, No. 50 (*Mary Morris v. Thomas Morris and others*). The estimated cost of rebuilding the works was £2200.

<sup>2</sup> The water-house at Broken Wharf was burnt, and the New River Company did not supply the area covered by the London Bridge Works.

and complete disregard for irrelevant detail, it could isolate the core of each problem and show the participants, perhaps for the first time, where their real interests met. This it did, day after day, building up a body of counsel who must by the end have done much of such preliminary work for it. It was not prepared, however, to fill the whole of its time with the unravelling of family settlements. To at least one petitioner, with a title for the term of her life, it decreed a devisable additional term of thirty-one years, conditional upon rebuilding by a fixed date. The rent for that extra time was laid down, but the Court left it to the ordinary courts to decide which of the many claimants had the best title to it. Having safeguarded the rebuilding, it felt that it had played its part.<sup>1</sup>

In some respects, however, its most valuable work was done on the large group of miscellaneous cases for which no standard solution could be worked out without the possibility of causing real hardship to some innocent party. The infinitely varying annuities secured on rents or houses,<sup>2</sup> the problems of part ownership,<sup>3</sup> the adjustments necessitated by the staking of parts of a site into the street,<sup>4</sup> are examples of this group. Some of them involved important principles. If John Hamond, the owner of property in Mincing Lane and Tower Street, could have compelled the Haberdashers' Company to contribute out of their corporate funds towards the cost of rebuilding because they were the owners of a charitable rent-charge on it, every Company in London would have been affected.<sup>5</sup> Similarly Henry Pinckney, the goldsmith, and many like him, would have been able to build much more imposing and convenient houses if the Court had ruled that, with its per-

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MS. 5063, No. 58 (Frances Markham, widow, *v.* Anne, John, and Thomas Dove and others).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 15 (Samuell Howard *v.* Richard Baskerville, gent.); No. 69 (Sir Charles Doe *v.* William Knight).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 5 (Thomas Boylston *v.* Thomas Cressey); No. 62 (Robert Twiford *v.* Francis Lodge).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 27 (William Cook *v.* James East); No. 86 (Sir Samuel Barnardiston, Bart., *v.* William Yard).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 37 (John Hamond *v.* Haberdashers' Company).



Sir Matthew Hale, Lord Chief Baron

National Portrait Gallery

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mission, he could have bought, against the lessee's will, his term in a small plot which separated the front and back parts of Pinckney's property.<sup>1</sup> But the Court held that trustees who were merely agents receiving and distributing under a will could not be compelled to draw upon their own funds to restore those of the trust,<sup>2</sup> and that, however reasonable the offer and the circumstances which caused it to be made, it had no right to assail the tenure of lawful occupiers unconnected save by proximity with another party. In this kind of case legal skill was essential. Fortunately it was there in abundance. Whether the Court was deciding difficult legal points, or carefully bringing the obstinate to moderation, unravelling a tangle, or merely adding its authority to terms already half agreed, it admirably satisfied the needs of the citizens.<sup>3</sup> Sitting, during the early months, on four working days out of six,<sup>4</sup> it also set them an example in application and diligence. But its value cannot be estimated in figures. To say that it decided more than fifteen hundred cases, to compute that they represented more than ten per cent of all the houses burnt down, to add up the fees saved or the hours gained, is no way of assessing it. The worth of just settlements, freely given, with the interests of London as their pole star, cannot be brought down to the thin precision of

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MS. 5063, No. 29 (Henry Pinckney v. Thomas Thorold and Thomas Gibbon Taylor).

<sup>2</sup> The rentcharge itself was of course reduced.

<sup>3</sup> I have made no attempt to compute how many of the cases were brought because one of the parties would normally have been unable to make the agreement required.

<sup>4</sup> The figures are most impressive. During the first sixteen weeks (February 27th to June 18th, 1667), which included Easter and Ascensiontide, it sat on forty-seven days, and decided 136 cases. As a minimum of three Judges had to sit for each case, 504 appearances were made. Mr. Justice Archer (77), Baron Turner (74), and the Lord Chief Baron (Matthew Hale, 70) bore the chief weight, but no Judge made less than 21 appearances. Later figures can equal these, but the work was not then so heavy. In these first days Judges, counsel and citizens were new to the work, and principles and practice had both to be worked out. Later came relief in all these respects. After the first eighty cases my notes repeat monotonously 'nothing new'. Occasionally an interesting point occurred – the Court's refusal to allow that it had no jurisdiction (Add. MS. 5064, No. 100, Walter Blake, Esq., for Hester Boulton v. Stephen Boulton, Esq.), or its intelligent thinking for improvements (*ibid.*, No. 110, Edward Brewster v. Sir Thomas Allen, Knight) – but for the most part it was old problems in varying guises.

arabic numerals. Had any man asked he could not have been answered, though he might have been shown — all London, from the Monument.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the Fire Court was being prepared, the City was hurriedly considering problems which it could not delegate with such joyful confidence. Of these the chief was the width and the classification of the streets. The controversy which had raged on this subject ever since the end of the Fire had been only slightly advanced by the Rebuilding Act. Parliament had been able to agree that three things should be done to relieve the congestion of traffic from the river,<sup>2</sup> but after that the argument had become so fierce that the Members had ended by leaving the whole thorny problem to the City and the King, stipulating only that certain main streets should be widened by an unspecified amount, and that the minimum for 'all strait and narrow passages' should be fourteen feet. Until these stipulations had been embodied in actual proposals, no streets could be marked out, nobody could begin to build, and no real estimate could be formed of the results achieved by the Act.<sup>3</sup>

The City began work on them immediately. It was fully conscious of, and in full sympathy with the citizens' desire to

<sup>1</sup> The following Judges served in the Fire Court: Sir John Archer, Sir Edward Atkyns, Sir Robert Atkyns, Sir Orlando Bridgeman, Sir Samuel Brown, Sir William Ellys, Sir Heneage Finch, Sir Matthew Hale, Sir John Kelynge, Sir Timothy Lyttleton, Sir William Morton, Sir Francis North, Sir Richard Rainsford, Sir Edward Thurland, Sir Christopher Turner, Sir Edward Turner, Sir Thomas Twisden, Sir Thomas Tyrrell, Sir John Vaughan, Sir William Wylde, Sir Hugh Wyndham, Sir Wadham Wyndham.

Summaries of their careers may conveniently be found in the *Catalogue of the Works of Art belonging to the Corporation of London* (1910), compiled by A. G. Temple. Their portraits by Michael Wright, painted to demonstrate the gratitude of the City, may be seen in the art gallery of the Guildhall.

<sup>2</sup> S. 40 of the Act laid down that Water Lane (from Fleet Street to Whitefriars), a street from Cheapside to the Thames at Three Cranes Wharf, and a street from Mincing Lane to Thames Street, near the Custom House, should be either enlarged to twenty-four feet or newly made with that width 'for the convenience of Trade and better passage of Carts and other carriages to and from the . . . River'.

<sup>3</sup> Acts of Parliament are spelt with a capital 'A', acts of Common Council with a small 'a'.



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start building, but it could not complete the work in a day. Its plans would have to satisfy others besides itself. The Privy Council was concerned, and ultimately the King, and their inclinations were all towards the maximum improvement. They would not allow opportunities to be missed and would require to be satisfied that everything possible was being done. The citizens might grumble, but the work had to be done properly. It was; but even so, progress was so rapid that the final proposals were ready in draft by February 27th.<sup>1</sup> It remained for them to be put into their final form, and to be presented to the Council's Rebuilding Committee. That done they could go before the King. Thomas Hollier might grumble and declare that he 'would be a builder again, but . . . knows not what restrictions there will be, so as it is unsafe for him to begin',<sup>2</sup> but the City was doing its best, and could hurry no faster. That everything might be ready for the final decision, orders were given for Mills and Jerman to make immediate provision of stakes for setting out the streets.<sup>3</sup> On March 6th the proposals came before the King in Council, only to be returned with orders to plot the proposed streets on a map<sup>4</sup> so that the King might better be able to judge their breadth and give directions accordingly.<sup>5</sup> On the 12th the final meeting took place.

It was a remarkable occasion. Six months earlier men had

<sup>1</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 146v - 147.

<sup>2</sup> *Pepys's Diary*, February 28th, 1667. Hollier was a surgeon of some eminence at St. Thomas's Hospital. He appears also as Holyer and Holliard.

<sup>3</sup> *Repert.*, 72, f. 72. The order was given on March 5th obviously with the hope that everything would be settled at the meeting on the 6th.

<sup>4</sup> The survey, in its final form of a map of the streets, had at last been completed, but exactly when I do not know. The engravings by Hollar and by George Vertue of the single map compiled by John Leake from the surveys of the districts allotted to him and to the five other surveyors state respectively that the work was 'First Described in Six Plats', 'in Dec<sup>br</sup> A<sup>o</sup> 1666' and '10 Decem<sup>r</sup> A<sup>o</sup> Dom<sup>i</sup> 1666'. The draft in the British Museum (Add. MS. 5415 E 1), which may be Leake's original, simply says 'December 1666'. Yet the City declared on January 5th, 1667, that 'The Survey and admeasure<sup>nt</sup> of the Streetes by reason of the wheather could not bee soe soone nor is yet perfected': (*Jor.*, 46, f. 136). It may be that the dates on the maps refer to the dates on which the surveyors, after completing their preliminary arrangements, began the actual measuring.

<sup>5</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, p. 327.



believed that the very place in which the Council met was in danger from the flames,<sup>1</sup> and most of those present had been toiling in the burning city. With the extinguishing of the Fire had come the determination to turn calamity to good use. London was to be reborn, purged of its failings, worthy of its splendid site. Those hopes, once so high, had flickered and grown dim. Month after month the decision had been put off, and the difficulties had seemed to grow greater. Now at last an ending of some sort was to be made. The King was there in person, 'the Map of the Citty lying before him . . . lookeing upon the lines drawne out in the said Map'<sup>2</sup> with the City's representatives waiting to hear his will. But the drama was apparent, not real. At each stage in the planning there had been the same illusion. At each a dramatist could have created a scene showing London's fate in the balance. But to do it he would have needed to concentrate all attention on the appearance and none on the reality of the situation. Ignore reality, forget limitations of authority and means, and Charles, the King, could be made the arbiter of London's future. Brought back to earth again, he could suggest, he could propose, he could promise help — and no more.

All these he did. Following Parliament's instructions concerning the streets to be widened, the City had proposed that the western exit, from St. Paul's to the edge of the ruins, should be made forty feet wide, and the north-western, through Newgate, about the same;<sup>3</sup> that the improvements there should be carried on right through the centre of the city by widening to forty feet Blowbladder Street, the gateway from St. Paul's Churchyard into Cheapside, the Poultry, and the west end of Cornhill. Between these last two the obstacle of the Stocks Building was to be entirely removed. At the eastern end of the city a clear road of thirty-five feet was to run from Leaden-

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1666-67, p. 99; W. G. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 147.

<sup>3</sup> By the removal of the four houses which jutted out east of Warwick Lane, and of the Middle Row in the Shambles. The four houses were built on the site of St. Ewen's Church.

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hall to London Bridge, joined at St. Magnus Church by a Thames Street which from there to Tower Dock would be increased to thirty feet. Traffic north and south had been catered for in part by the provisions in the Act for the creation of a new street, twenty-four feet wide, from Cheapside to Three Cranes Wharf, and for the enlarging to the same size of Water Lane (Fleet Street) and of the line of Mincing Lane and St. Dunstan's Hill. To these the City added St. Martin Le Grand, from Aldersgate to Blowbladder Street, and Ave Mary Lane, the latter being widened only to eighteen feet, but gaining greater ease by the raising of Fleet Bridge six feet and an abatement of Ludgate Hill by a further four.<sup>1</sup> A schedule of 'high and principle streets' completed the proposals.

Charles had had a week in which to consider the matter and, with the map before him, he made the suggestions that an intelligent man might have been expected to make. He was not the arbiter of London's future, but he had foresight and he had imagination. He knew that the main outline of the proposals could not be altered, but that details could still be changed, and that details in some instances were almost as important as principles. Inside the city the cost of land was likely to be prohibitive, but on its edges more could be done. Voluntary improvements were possible, and private wealth might be enlisted where public funds failed. He acted accordingly. The wealthy goldsmiths living in Lombard Street would readily spend money on their houses — let that street, therefore, be added to the list of high streets. The lesser Companies could find better sites for their halls than the cramped back streets in which many of them had formerly lived — let them be instructed to build along the Thames, enriching the river-front with dignified houses and releasing space valuable for other purposes. If St. Paul's was to be rebuilt much rubble would have to be disposed of — no easy matter in the centre of London. By drawing it down the short descent to the Fleet River and using it to raise the approaches

<sup>1</sup> Provision was also made for the new street from Cheapside to the Guildhall.

to the bridge, the arch of the latter could be raised nine feet above the water instead of six. This would much facilitate the passage of boats, especially at high tide, and would solve two problems to their mutual advantage.

These were suggestions which could be acted upon without adding materially to the City's burdens, and the delegation, which had undoubtedly come prepared for something drastic, must have received them with relief. But the remainder gave more cause for alarm. Charles realized that no adequate provision had been made either for the present or for the future position in the Liberties west of the city wall.<sup>1</sup> The widening from Cheapside to Fleet Street would help to accommodate the rapidly growing traffic between London and Westminster, but the improvements inside Newgate had not been continued down the steep, narrow hill outside it, and no provision had been made for a satisfactory link between the two gates. The exit through Newgate was less important than that through Ludgate, but it too served a growing area and, if the Fleet scheme was a success,<sup>2</sup> would receive an increasing volume of heavy traffic from the new wharves. If Newgate Street was to be enlarged, it was only reasonable to utilize the gains therefrom by treating Snow Hill in the same way. That done, little more was needed to make the exit run unobstructed to Holborn Bar. Equally necessary was the provision of a link for the two gates. An adequate street running north between the wall and the Fleet would allow coaches from Westminster to travel to north London via Newgate, instead of adding to the congestion around St. Paul's. For most of the distance the Old Bailey was wide enough to carry such traffic, but its northern end was blocked by a middle row. Remove that and the way would be clear. Remove the continuation of that middle row on the other side of Snow Hill and the approach to Smithfield would also be thrown open. Carry the Old Bailey on southwards to

<sup>1</sup> If anyone feels tempted to ascribe to Charles a peculiar prescience in this matter, he should look back to the proposals threshed out by the committees of the Privy Council and the City, and approved in October 1666 (see p. 61).

<sup>2</sup> See the chapter given to this scheme.

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the Thames and the whole of the western areas would receive, for the first time, an adequate outlet and an independent approach from the Thames. These proposals Charles made, completing them with a declaration that the scheduled widening from Cheapside to Fleet Street was not sufficient. In place of forty feet it should be increased to fifty.

In his final suggestion Charles dealt with the markets. It was at once the simplest and the most revolutionary of them all. He urged that the stalls and the standings which had long blocked Newgate, Cheapside, and Leadenhall Street should be prohibited and that, in the future, the city's traditional street markets should be abolished in favour of defined market-places, removed from the main thoroughfares, on sites of their own. This was a change which nobody could oppose. The space was badly needed, and the obstruction caused by both buyers and sellers had long been notorious. Special market places would be easier to regulate, easier to clean, and more convenient for all concerned. It is hard to see why the City had not itself made such a proposal. Once made, it was accepted without argument and faithfully carried out. In conclusion, the King promised his royal favour towards the rebuilding, and appointed May, Wren and Pratt 'to be ready at all times upon notice to confer w<sup>th</sup> the Co<sup>tee</sup> of the Citty and their Survey<sup>rs</sup> and to give their best advice and assistance when ever it shall be required'.<sup>1</sup>

The City's delegation retired and, on receipt of their report, the Common Council immediately set to work to consider its reply. The position was hardly easy. The King's wishes could not at any time be ignored, and during the period of recovery his favour was more than ever necessary. But the old problem of how to pay for improvements was still unsolved, and the reluctance of the City to embark on further expenditure had not diminished. Whatever the necessity of royal favour, however wise the King's suggestions, failing a solution of that problem, the City's attitude was bound to be cautious. That the sug-

<sup>1</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, pp. 334-5; *Jor.* 46, ff. 147-8.

gestions were wise cannot be doubted, and, in making them, Charles had shown a genuine appreciation of the City's difficulties. He had not put forward Utopian proposals for vast thoroughfares through the centre of London, but had concentrated on reasonable possibilities. Money spent as he indicated would accomplish far more than a corresponding expenditure on widenings within the walls. In the undeveloped or unfavoured areas in the western liberties land could still be obtained cheaply. Some of the cost would be recoverable by contributions from the owners of sites whose value had been enhanced by the changes,<sup>1</sup> and even the undoubtedly expensive widening of the exit through Ludgate would be helped by the fact that much of Fleet Street was already fifty feet wide. The cost of the markets was more problematical, but here again garden ground behind the main streets would be relatively cheap, and the same help might be expected from improved values. The very excellence of the suggestions made rejection seem unreasonable and heightened the City's dilemma. However, an immediate answer was not required, and the City might well find consolation in the extent by which the rebuilding had been advanced. At long last the main framework of the replanning had been approved and something could be done to settle the details. Before turning to the consideration of its answer to Charles or even to those details, the Common Council was able to choose the Surveyors called for under the Rebuilding Act and to order them to begin staking out the streets now agreed upon.<sup>2</sup> Before the end of the month the

<sup>1</sup> S. 24 of the Rebuilding Act provided that those benefiting from improvements made under the Act should pay for the advantage they had received. In case of dispute, the amount was to be assessed by a jury.

<sup>2</sup> The surveyors chosen were Mills, Hooke, Jerman, and John Oliver: (*For.*, 46, f. 148). The two last did not accept the office, no reasons being entered. Mills and Hooke were sworn in on March 14th (*Repert.*, 72, f. 80), and their authority for the staking was sealed by the City on the 20th: (*Repert.*, 72, f. 81). The actual staking seems to have begun on the 24th: (*Guildhall Lib. MS.* 322). Oliver, who declared in 1687 that he had then practised surveying for 40 years, was a person of some note. He had been specially added to the committee dealing with the enlargement of the streets (February 27th, 1667, *For.*, 46, f. 147), and had then been urged to become a surveyor. The latter he declined, offering however to assist without pay during the absence of



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citizens were to see for themselves the main outline of the new highways,<sup>1</sup> and could plan their own building accordingly. Whatever difficulties might remain, here at least was substantial cause for rejoicing.

Fortified by reports from its surveyors the City presented its answers to Charles on March 22nd, and with them a full list of the streets as classified under the Act. The proposals for Lombard Street and for Fleet Bridge it accepted. The King's wishes were being conveyed to the Companies, with a recommendation to follow them if that should be possible. The markets would also be removed from the streets, though the new sites could not be fixed until full consideration had been given to the alternatives available. The surveyors had reported that it would be possible to widen the Ludgate exit to forty-five feet, but not to fifty, and, if His Majesty consented, that would be done. With the remaining proposals it was not possible to comply, since the Act provided no powers either for taking the ground required or to pay for it if so taken. Nevertheless, the City would do what it could to improve Snow Hill by contracting the conduit at its foot and, if the necessary consent could be obtained from the ecclesiastical authorities, by opening the narrowest part next to St. Sepulchre's church.<sup>2</sup> It was a clever way out of the dilemma, and though the King was plainly disappointed that more had not been done, he could not reproach the City for doing too little. He gave his approval to the answer, but added, as an admonition for the

<sup>1</sup> *Pepys's Diary*, March 29th, 1667.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, ff. 148-9.

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Jerman. He now declined for the second time, but when Mills was ill during the summer of 1667, he carried out his promise to help. He was ultimately prevailed on to accept the post, being sworn on January 27th, 1668: (*Repert.*, 73, f. 62). His surveys were much more carefully entered than those of either Hooke or Mills, and many more of them contain plans of the sites concerned. He built a number of private houses, was architect to the Wood Street Compter, and deputy-surveyor of St. Paul's. In 1686 he became Mason to the King. I have tentatively identified him with the person of the same name living in the parish of Holy Trinity the Less who was frequently consulted about the rebuilding of the church of St. Michael Queenhythe, to which that parish was united, often held office there, and in 1685, gave a bell to the church. (See uncatalogued papers relating to the two parishes preserved at St. James Garlickhythe.)

future, a clear intimation that he expected from the City a liberal interpretation of its responsibilities. '... his Ma<sup>tie</sup> doth further recommend to the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen that they endeavour by mediation and Advice, in which they shall have all Assistance from his Ma<sup>tie</sup> to procure the Consent of all Persons concerned, that such Places may be enlarged, and such other things done, as may contribute to the Beauty Ornament & Convenience of the Citty, although they may not seeme to have full Power and Authority to direct and order the same by the strict Letter of the Act of Parliament.' Lest there should be any misunderstanding as to what lay particularly in the King's mind, he added a special reference to the widening of Paternoster Row and to the 'other things ... formerly recommended'.<sup>1</sup>

By invoking the Act the City had blocked criticism and gained its point. Later generations might regret that the King's advice had not been followed, but, for the moment, it ensured the avoidance of further delays and carried the work of replanning another step forward. Details could now be considered and, whilst the Surveyors toiled amongst the ruins plotting the dimensions of almost obliterated alleys, the City worked to devise a system under which each man's site could be delimited, compensation money paid, and the provisions of the Act enforced without too much friction and with the minimum of fraud. This was not easy but it was ultimately and successfully accomplished. On April 29th the whole medley of rules and widenings was embodied in an act of Common Council.<sup>2</sup> More of both were still to come,<sup>3</sup> and the King's sanction had still to be obtained,<sup>4</sup> but, with the publication of the act, the majority of the citizens knew both where and how they were entitled to rebuild, and what it was necessary for them to do in order to begin. By some freak of fate, it formed

<sup>1</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, p. 351.

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 46, ff. 151-2.

<sup>3</sup> See *Repert.*, 72, ff. 95, 105 and 108.

<sup>4</sup> The first part of the act laid down matters already sanctioned; much if not all of the rest must have been approved by the King, but it still needed formal consent. This was given on May 8th: (*P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, pp. 407-9).



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the first entry in the records of the first meeting of the Common Council held in the Guildhall<sup>1</sup> since the advent of the Fire. Looking back it seems symbolical of London's fate. Like the Guildhall the city was to be patched up, repaired, improved. With new approaches, with a better lay-out, she was yet to preserve her old entity. The attractions of an entirely new ground-plan had faded. In spite of enthusiasm, in spite of anxious consideration, they had been deemed impracticable. The ruined Guildhall stood for a reality stronger than the paper planning and the dream city which would have swept it and its site into oblivion.

<sup>1</sup> Orders had been given on September 7th for clearing the Guildhall and its offices: (*Repert.*, 71, f. 169). On the 26th the City workmen had been instructed to repair the justice rooms in readiness for the Judges (*For.*, 46, f. 120), who were thus able to hold their court there, though the City apologized for the inadequacy of such temporary work (*Repert.*, 72, f. 1). The improvised structures within the walls were later taken down, and the whole building restored, using the substantial ruins left by the Fire.

LABOUR AND MATERIALS FOR  
THE REBUILDING

THE act of April 29th was followed at intervals by additions and modifications. More streets were widened, and land was compulsorily taken over for other public purposes. In sum the alteration was great, but many of its components were small, and consideration of the changes made in the detail of London's street plan may best be deferred until they can be treated in full and as a whole. Their effect on the community, as builders, was not great. Some years were to pass before they were completed, and even then they seriously affected only a minority. In April 1667, when it first became possible for everyone to start building, and the first and greatest staking had been finished, most men were able to make a final estimate of the state of their ground. Some had lost heavily, but it was clear that many sites had only to part with a narrow strip, easily made good by moving the whole building a fraction backwards, whilst many more would have to contribute nothing at all. Difficulties over ground were localized and seldom grievous. The vital problem was that of supplies. Some men would have to seek new plots and others to adjust, but the majority need do neither, whereas every man, whatever his building, was affected by the need to find labour and materials. London, in fact, was about to face in an acute form a problem which has taxed the resources of communities from the days of primitive slave-raiding to those of hasty rearmament. It needed for a relatively short time, much additional labour and a fantastic expansion in the supply of certain commodities. It needed them urgently, quickly, and cheaply, and it desired to have them with a minimum of sacrifice on its own part. Parliament and City had each grappled with the problem.

## LABOUR AND MATERIALS FOR REBUILDING

Their solution, embodied in sections 14-16 of the Rebuilding Act, was now to be tested.

These sections are interesting. Their aim, as stated in the preamble, has already been quoted. '... to the end the ... Builders may receive due encouragement by haveing the materials for building at reasonable prices and getting of Workemen for moderate wages'. Its attainment was sought by means which combined tradition with something directly opposed to it. The two sections dealing with prices and wages were strictly traditional. Both, if the need arose, were to be set and controlled by authority. If the City complained of combination or unreasonable exactions by makers of bricks or tiles or by lime burners, two or more of the Justices of the King's Bench were to summon such number of the makers as they thought fit from any place within five miles of the Thames. They were to confer with them and then to fix prices which would give a reasonable profit but prevent any extortion. In addition, they were to fix the costs chargeable for carriage to London. If the makers refused to appear, the Justices were to proceed without them. Once fixed, the prices were to be set out and proclaimed by the Lord Mayor, and were to be binding on all persons. If the makers refused to sell at the figures laid down, or if anyone secretly agreed to give more, conviction would be followed by a maximum of one month's imprisonment or of a fine of ten pounds. If the sentence was a fine, the amount was to be awarded to the injured party up to the extent of his damage, the excess being payable to the City towards the cost of its new public buildings. If any artificer, workman or labourer, or any body of them, attempted to extort unreasonable wages, a similar procedure was to be followed.

The principles of these provisions contained nothing new, but the side-light cast on the general position is worth notice. The use of the judges to assess reasonable prices suggests either a concession to the crisis or else a wish in such exceptional circumstances to take the matter out of the hands of Privy Council and City. The amount of the fine seems out of all

proportion to the possible profits to be made, unless it was expected that the ordinary buyer of bricks would be an owner buying direct for one or two houses at a time. The only materials covered are brick, tiles and lime, and the area expected to supply them is clearly indicated.

If these side-lights correctly show what happened, it should not have been impossible to control prices; but whether they did remain at reasonable levels, and whether the bulk of supplies did come from the Thames basin, are difficult questions. To answer them with assurance would entail exhaustive research, and even then the chance of a failure would be appreciable. Here they are important only in so far as they affected the progress of the rebuilding, and a more superficial inquiry is sufficient. This suggests that the rebuilding was not seriously prejudiced by combinations or exactions on the part either of manufacturers or workmen, and that the Thames basin was at least an important source of supplies. For a while, when Dutch capers were cutting off the coal imports from the north-east coast, and coal prices in London soared to famine levels,<sup>1</sup> it was impossible to obtain building materials, but, when this special handicap ceased,<sup>2</sup> coal stocks were replenished and brick-making could be expanded to meet the demand. At no time did the City record the receipt of complaints about combination or excessive prices, and the notes of the committees managing its own very extensive rebuilding make no mention of them. It received no petitions that have survived asking either for supplies to be hurried or prices to be moderated, and there is no mention of any such petitions being considered. Nor, when opportunities occurred for intervention, did it make any such move. If prices had been exorbitant, it is almost certain that it would only have allowed its tenants licences to

<sup>1</sup> S. Rolle in *London's Resurrection* (1668) mentions three and four pounds per chaldron as the top prices (p. 9). Pepys gives three guineas on December 8th, 1666, four pounds in the following March, and £5 10s. od. on June 26th.

<sup>2</sup> The Treaty of Breda was signed on July 31st, 1667. This did not leave sufficient time for the coal fleet to meet the usual demand for stores to last through the winter, and the shortage was again acute by November: (*Pepys's Diary*, November 26th, 1667).

make bricks on the condition that they were sold at or below a fixed rate. If cartage rates had been too high, the permission to make up and use a road damaged by the constant passage of brick-wagons would have been qualified by stipulations on this score. Samuel Rolle, whose sermons covered the whole field of rebuilding activities, never commented on such abuses, except during the coal-famine. He constantly exhorted men to invest in the erection of new houses, contrasting their probable yield with the six per cent which was all that could then be hoped for in foreign trade, despite its hazards.<sup>1</sup> He urged workmen to work well, and suppliers of materials to wrong themselves rather than others, but, in discourses whose form and content remarkably resembled the modern leading articles whose place they took, he never attacked profiteers or exorbitant labour. Phillippes,<sup>2</sup> in his handbook for buyers, did go so far as to declare that bricks were 'now somewhat dear, about 18 or 20s a thousand', but his is the nearest thing to a complaint that the records disclose. The cumulative value of such negative evidence is strong. It does not prove that prices did not rise, but it is a reasonable indication that they did not rise oppressively. The city never had recourse to the price-fixing clauses, and it would appear that it never needed to do so.

How the demand for supplies was met without seriously raising prices can only be guessed at.<sup>3</sup> The absence of a rise in wages is more easily accounted for. The main cause, undoubtedly, was the opening of the highly paid London labour market to the provincial artificer. Section 16 of the Act granted to all artificers, labourers and workmen, who were not freemen of London, but who were employed in the rebuilding of the city, the same liberty of working as the freemen, of those

<sup>1</sup> S. Rolle, op. cit., p. 37. Rolle was a person of some eminence. A scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge, he was later appointed chaplain in ordinary to the King.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit. Printed in 1676, it was almost certainly prepared several years earlier. It was the fifth edition of a popular handbook, the fourth, which appeared in 1663, having been largely burnt in the Fire. The price at Cambridge, a brick-using town, varied between 17s. and 21s. during the years 1659-65: (J. E. Thorold Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, VI (Oxford, 1888), pp. 518-19).

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 121 *et seq.*

trades, enjoyed or ought to enjoy. This right was to endure for seven years, and, if the rebuilding was not finished in that period, it was to be extended accordingly. Those who exercised it for seven years were granted the further privilege of working with the same liberty as freemen for the rest of their lives.<sup>1</sup> This was a direct violation of the hard-won, long-established rights of the London crafts. It was a triumph of parliamentary good sense over privileges secured with all the strength of charter and seal. More important still, it was a victory over conceptions still reasonably in accord with the life of a community in which regulation and reservation of crafts were only gradually dissolving before the growth of the suburbs and the influence of unfettered capital. Yet, though it secured equality in the right to work, the real value of the enactment depended on the interpretation put upon it by the City. The ordinary freeman, whether carpenter, joiner, bricklayer, or plasterer, was in theory always, and in practice sometimes, subject to the rules of the Company governing his craft. 'False work' could be searched for and penalized, and, if the Company bore a grudge against any man, it could make his position difficult, and possibly unendurable. This control was not invalidated by the statute and, unless the City intervened, it was more than probable that it would be used to harass the new-comers. The attitude of the Carpenters' Company may serve as an example. Realizing from the beginning that concessions would have to be made, it had sought to ensure that control, at least, would be left in its hands. In November 1666 it had petitioned, asking that no carpenters might be allowed to work within the city or its liberties who had not served the seven years' apprenticeship to the craft demanded by the statute of apprentices.<sup>2</sup> To ensure that such unqualified persons did not obtain work, the Company was to be empowered to examine their indentures and to reject those who had not duly served. Later in the month it went

<sup>1</sup> If they did so they were to be liable for the same offices and duties in the service and government of the city as freemen of their respective crafts.

<sup>2</sup> 5 Elizabeth, c. 4.

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a long step further, asking that if during the state of emergency qualified foreigners were allowed to work in London, it might only be as journeymen or servants, and not as master-workmen or as undertakers.<sup>1</sup> If granted this would have reserved all profits to the free carpenters, and given the Company security for the future. Apprentices would have been bound and made free at Carpenters' Hall,<sup>2</sup> and the foreigners, even if they could produce satisfactory credentials, kept in a state of complete and permanent subordination. The City's Bill, approved five days after the second petition, would apparently have bowed to the established order, for it did not even mention concessions to unfree workmen. If this was the City's design, the statute represented an enlightened intervention, though in face of Companies determined to retain all that they could of their privileged position, it might not have accomplished its object. In fact, it was immediately necessary for the City to step in to protect the foreigners. As early as May 24th, 1667, it had to order that actions should not be brought against those who were working on the rebuilding in accordance with the Act. Some actions had already been started and these were to be withdrawn without charge to the defendant.<sup>3</sup> Against such active resentment it was difficult for Parliament to legislate without at the same time attacking the whole structure of the Companies, though the City could make direct intervention by Parliament unnecessary. The fact that it appreciated the emergency, refused to support the Companies, and supplemented the provisions of the Act, was a potent factor in the rebuilding.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. B. Jupp and W. W. Pocock, *An Historical Account of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters* (1887), pp. 278-9.

<sup>2</sup> In so far as the Company was able to ensure that its regulations were observed by its members. It was always difficult to prevent the procuring of apprentices by a 'turnover' from a master in another Company, and carpenters who were free of other Companies were outside its control.

<sup>3</sup> *Repert.*, 73, f. 113.

<sup>4</sup> Even so, the rebuilding seems to have been accompanied by a steady rumble of discontent from the officers of the building crafts. Directed mainly against foreigners declared to lack the necessary apprenticeship qualification, it was particularly evident in the first six months of 1670 (see *Repert.*, 75, ff. 65, 88v, 187 and 207).

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Once opened, London had no difficulty in obtaining labour. The level of its wages was higher than that of England as a whole,<sup>1</sup> and there was no general boom to keep the provincial artisan at home. By tradition, craftsmen in the building trade were more ready to move than those in other trades, and, as London seems already to have been regarded as superior to the provinces in the training it could give, there were probably men in plenty to advise intending migrants.<sup>2</sup> Extraneous causes also helped. The troubled years had drawn many from their homes and unsettled many others. Ex-soldiers, recently demobilized and not too well established;<sup>3</sup> masters, and apprentices near the end of their articles, whom the Plague had uprooted: such men would drift easily to a centre offering work for all, asking few questions, and troubling little about credentials. The reasons varied, but the effect was unquestionable. The chance of obtaining sure work, the lure of high wages, and the pull which London has for so long exerted — these, and other minor causes, combined to draw workmen in plenty to the city ruins.

Records of the immigrants are scanty, and sparing of detail. The authorities, royal, city and local, were all too busy to attend to such things, and the Companies, with their general searches in abeyance, did not fill the gap. Fortunately many of them remained to help in repopling the city, and, when they applied for its freedom, the clerk occasionally made a note of their origin.<sup>4</sup> Normally he was satisfied with the entry 'having duly served Apprenticeship in the country', but sometimes there was more. One carpenter had been appren-

<sup>1</sup> J. E. Thorold Rogers, op. cit., v (Oxford, 1887), chap. xxiii, and *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* (1884), p. 327.

<sup>2</sup> The majority of the apprentices bound at Carpenters' Hall came from the country and, at the completion of their articles, returned there again. All the counties of England are represented, and there are entries from Wales, Scotland and Ireland. See the particulars given in *Records of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters*, transcribed and edited by Bower Marsh (Oxford, 1913), I, *Apprentices' Entry Books*, 1654-94.

<sup>3</sup> 12 Charles II, c. 16, had sought to help them by relaxing in their favour municipal by-laws and the provisions of the statute of Apprentices.

<sup>4</sup> Their petitions and the decisions of the Court of Aldermen thereon are noted in *Repertories 75-81 passim*. See pp. 300 *et seq.* for a fuller treatment of the repopling.



ticed in Ireland, another backed his credentials by declaring that he was a freeman of York.<sup>1</sup> A joiner came from Dublin, and a painter was a freeman of Oxford. One skilled in names and alive to the eccentricities of a hurried clerk's phonetic spelling, might deduce much more from the mere lists given. Owen Thomas must surely have come from Wales, and Boswortha from Cornwall. But in general, nothing more can be established than that the building trades spoke the truth when they complained in February 1670 that foreigners had come in from all parts of the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> For more than four years these men swamped the London artificer, filling the city with a babel of strange accents as they helped the great work of turning its ruins into a new city of fair and seemly houses.

Faced with such competition, the London freemen were in no position to combine to force up wages. The journeymen who had agitated so fiercely a bare twenty years earlier<sup>3</sup> were now swamped by foreigners as skilful as they and with less scruple about London-made rules. The niceties of the division of work between the different crafts made no appeal to immigrants from towns where specialization was less minute. Regulations allotting cupboards to joiners and shelving to carpenters<sup>4</sup> meant little to them, whilst they were merely irksome to masters with ample work and employers pressing for completion. In normal times the London master craftsman might be fiercely concerned for such rigidly defined rights, but when profits were his for the making he must have preferred the willing immigrant to the possibly more scrupu-

<sup>1</sup> Bower Marsh, op. cit., p. xi, mentions journeymen from Leicester, Beaumaris and Carmarthen. Master masons came from Taynton and Burford in Oxfordshire, and from the Isle of Portland: (Knoop and Jones, op. cit., pp. 35, 45).

<sup>2</sup> *Repert.*, 75, f. 89. The occasion was a joint petition by the Carpenters', Masons', Bricklayers', Joiners' and Plasterers' Companies against foreigners working on the rebuilding without the necessary qualifications of apprenticeship.

<sup>3</sup> The agitation had been strongly influenced by the political atmosphere of the period, but the reasons were mainly social and economic. An analysis of the various movements may be found in *Social Problems and Policy during the Puritan Revolution, 1640-60*, by M. James (1930), chap. 5.

<sup>4</sup> See the draft division of the work appertaining respectively to the joiners and the carpenters recommended by a committee of the Court of Aldermen in 1632. It is reprinted in full by Jupp and Pocock, op. cit., pp. 295-9.

lous journeyman. The authorities in the various Companies might be more particular, but they were not likely to receive wholehearted support until the rush of work abated. Carpenters, joiners and shipwrights were ready in 1671 to unite to oppose the attempt of the sawyers to form themselves into a separate Company,<sup>1</sup> but it was not until 1672, some six years after the Fire, that the old quarrel between the carpenters and the joiners broke out again.<sup>2</sup> Even then, it was an affair of the livery, rather than of the journeyman, and the interests of those two bodies were now more sharply divided than ever. The rebuilding had brought profits to the masters in all the building crafts, but to the journeymen it had meant the licensed competition of men whose standards were lower than their own and the abrogation of laboriously acquired safeguards. In such circumstances it was small wonder that no complaints about dearness of labour found their way to the City. With no shortage of hands and with the masters concerned to keep down wages, the journeymen had no chance. They maintained the levels to which wages had risen during the upward movement of the previous twenty years, but they could do nothing more.<sup>3</sup> When the first rush to rebuild had abated, they were probably worse off than they had been before the Fire. The new houses needed few repairs, the development of the areas west of the Liberties was not sufficient to provide employment for all, and the immigrant workmen had remained in appreciable numbers. As early as the autumn of 1674 the state of affairs was so bad that the journeymen carpenters were forced to petition the City for leave to stand

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 76, f. 111v, and 77, ff. 74v *et seq.* The fact that they were present in sufficient numbers to contemplate the formation of a separate company is an indication of the amount of building which was going on and of the extent of the migration to London. Normally, sawing was done as much as possible in the country, where wages were lower. The part of the Rebuilding Act concerning the scantlings dealt specially with 'Sawed Timber and Laths usually brought out of the West Country'.

<sup>2</sup> Their petitions to the Court of Aldermen are printed in full by Jupp and Pocock, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-6.

<sup>3</sup> See J. E. Thorold Rogers, *Agriculture and Prices*, v, chap. xxiii. Knoop and Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-3, examining the wages received by masons, confirm this conclusion so far as that trade is concerned.

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each day by the Royal Exchange to await hirers. Most significant of all, they gave as their reason the fact that the masters of the trade had been employing foreigners, with the allegation that there were not enough free journeymen!<sup>1</sup>

Although it is impossible to do more than guess at the sources of much of the supplies used for the rebuilding, the evidence available is sufficient to make the guesses seem reasonably accurate. The case of timber has already been touched on. In December 1666 the Privy Council, always concerned to preserve domestic supplies in case of naval emergency, referred to its rebuilding committee the question of the possible substitution of fir for oak, being informed that 'divers Timber Merchants are already buying up the Timber in the Country for the building of London'.<sup>2</sup> The committee's report is not entered, but the merchants continued to bring English timber to London, and Irish supplies may also have been drawn upon, for in 1667 a certain Captain Henry Nicoll bought two ships for that purpose.<sup>3</sup> But the main store must have been imported. Relaxation of the Navigation Act gave easy access to the Scandinavian forests, and there were plenty to take advantage of it. 'The Norwegians', people said, 'warmed themselves comfortably by the Fire of London'.<sup>4</sup> The prosperity of their community grew rapidly, to be marked before the end of the century by the construction of a church in Wellclose Square. The Port Books record the unending stream of shipments and if further evidence is required it may be found in the customs receipts. Revised and farmed anew less than six months before the Fire, the rent to the government was amended by agreement within a year of the start of the rebuilding, and for the balance of that time it was roughly trebled.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 80, f. 29. <sup>2</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, p. 229. <sup>3</sup> *Cal. S. P. Dom.*, 1667, p. 531.

<sup>4</sup> H. L. Faber, *Caius Gabriel Cibber*, 1630-1700 (Oxford, 1926), p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> The new farm, agreed on April 5th, 1666, ran for 21 years from September 29th, 1667. It covered unwrought wood, glass, earthenware, stoneware and citrous fruits, the rent being £2700 per annum. By agreement, in October 1667, it was increased to £6500 per annum: (*Cal. Treas. Bks.*, 1667-68, p. 515; 1672-75, p. 516). The exact amount at which the duty on wood was computed can only be guessed, but the preliminary negotiations for the farm make it seem probable that £1900 is not an underestimate.

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The demand for stone was such that it could not possibly have been met from any of the existing sources of supply, unless it had been spread over a number of years. At the outset, when the prospect of a shortage seemed serious, the City petitioned the King for leave for the citizens to buy unlimited supplies from the royal quarries on the isle of Portland.<sup>1</sup> The officials in charge, alarmed by the potential demand, suggested that all requests should first be considered and licensed by the Surveyor of Works,<sup>2</sup> but their fears were not justified. Few private builders availed themselves of the right to use stone, and the speed, and consequently the demands, of public rebuilding were strictly regulated. Policy, adjustment to supplies of labour, and the slow accumulation of funds, all operated to make such regulation desirable, but, irrespective of all else, it would have been necessitated by the slowness with which stone could be made available. The great buildings of the City, the churches, and, above all, St. Paul's required quantities which no conceivable expansion of supplies could have met if all had been rebuilt together. Control was essential. If private builders had been concerned it might have been difficult. With corporate bodies it was reasonably easy. In the case of the chief users, the City and the Churches,<sup>3</sup> it was exercised without any special legislation, whilst lack of funds compelled most of the Companies to defer their rebuilding for a while. The City spread its programme over a full eight years. Work on the Guildhall and the Royal Exchange<sup>4</sup> began early, and the Sessions House at Newgate required over £3000 in the year 1668-69,<sup>5</sup> but, apart from temporary repairs,

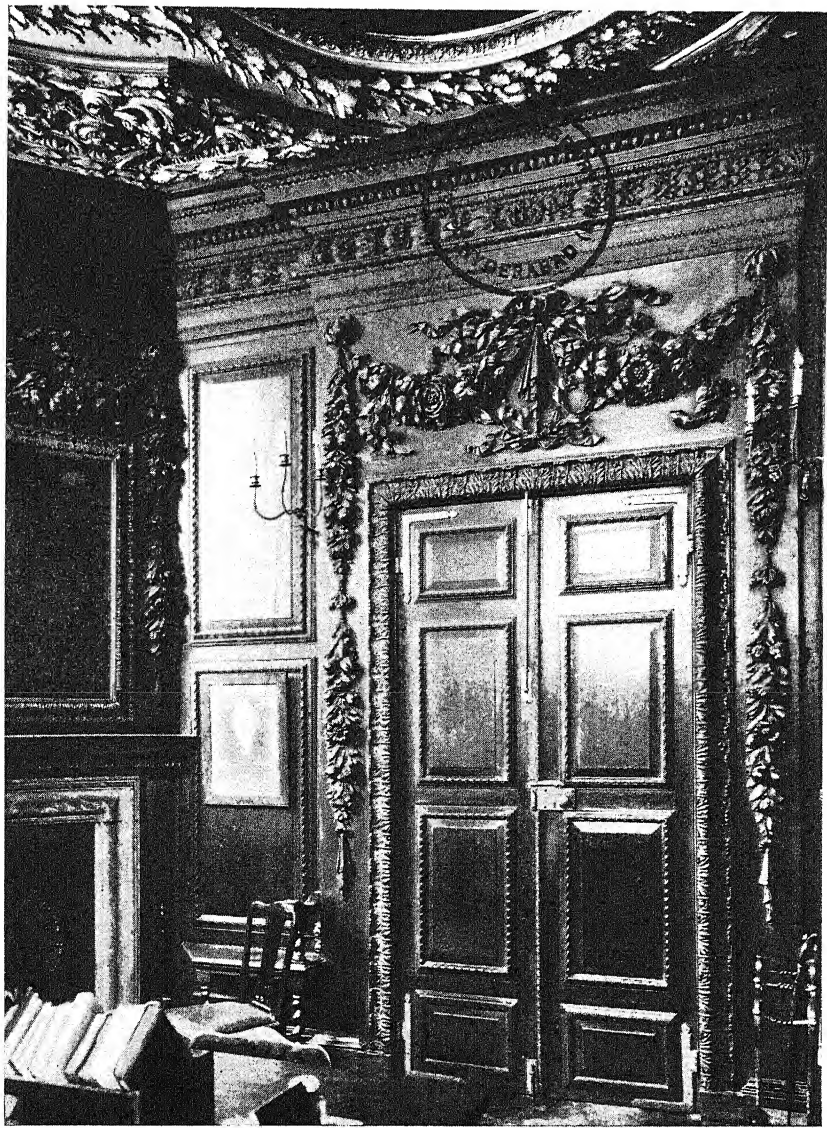
<sup>1</sup> *Cal. S. P. Dom.*, 1666-67, p. 572.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1667, p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> The Act of laying down which of the churches were to be rebuilt, and which suppressed, was not passed until April 1670. They were therefore automatically held back.

<sup>4</sup> The Royal Exchange was rebuilt in conjunction with the Mercers' Company, joint trustees with the City under Gresham's will: (see below, pp. 266-70).

<sup>5</sup> The City's year of account ran from Michaelmas. In this, and in all other payments by the City for building, it is well to bear in mind that the time-lag between the completion of a contract and the completion of the payments for it was always appreciable. A model for the new Sessions House was approved by the Court of Aldermen on February 18th, 1668: *Report.*, 73, f. 82).



The vestry, St. Lawrence Jewry

Intricate work of this kind, in wood, stone, plaster and metal, brought craftsmen from all over England to work and to settle in London

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most other building was deferred until 1670. The new gaol at Ludgate and the compters in Wood Street and The Poultry were not even authorized until December 1669.<sup>1</sup> Payments for Newgate began to be heavy in 1670-71, and those for Bridewell in 1671-72, whilst the work on the Monument took four years from 1671.<sup>2</sup>

The general rebuilding of the burnt churches began in 1670, directly the second Rebuilding Act<sup>3</sup> had removed the uncertainty as to which were to be suppressed, but more than half of them were still unstarted at the beginning of 1676.<sup>4</sup> Disputes between unwillingly united parishes caused delays, and the need to have money in hand before a start could be authorized added to them. The slow yield of the coal dues, on which they depended for funds, was in this instance of real value in its automatic regulation of the flow of work. In addition, the City deliberately discouraged an indiscriminate general start. To that end in February 1671 it closed the Chamber<sup>5</sup> to deposits by the parishes for future rebuilding, declaring that 'the number of Churches in hand are as many as are Suitable, to the Time, mony, Workemen, and Materialls, requisite to the Orderly finishing of them'.<sup>6</sup> 'Materialls' in this case covered all manner of things, but for practical purposes it meant stone. Apart from the substantial use which could be, and was, made of the stone in the burnt buildings, this had all to be brought in from outside. The churchwardens' accounts show that the materials of the old churches were carefully collected and preserved, and that their value

<sup>1</sup> The warrants to the committee placed in charge of each of them are still extant (*Guildhall Lib.*, MSS., 324-6).

<sup>2</sup> The model for it was not approved until the middle of February 1671: (*Repert.*, 76, f. 72v).

<sup>3</sup> This provided for the suppression of 35 of the burnt churches, and for the payment of 1s. 1½d. per chaldron out of an additional duty on coals towards the rebuilding of the remainder.

<sup>4</sup> See the analysis of Bodleian MS., Rawlinson B 388 by L. Weaver in *Archaeologia*, LXVI, pp. 15-22. For an account of the 'Tabernacles' - the temporary buildings which took the place of the churches until the latter could be rebuilt - see *The Victoria History of the Counties of England, London*, ed. W. Page (1909), I, p. 340.

<sup>5</sup> The City Treasury - usually known as the Chamber.

<sup>6</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 307.

was often appreciable,<sup>1</sup> but even when supplemented from the 35 which were suppressed, they could do little to meet the great quantities required.

The figures for St. Paul's have survived to illustrate both the extent of the demand and the quarries from which it was met.<sup>2</sup> All kinds of stone were used, from imported marble of various kinds to chalk and rubble, but by far the largest quantity was drawn from Portland: 50,322 tons were bought from the island, and to obtain them the builders had to secure from the Crown the grant of special quarries, construct roads and piers for working them, and defeat the opposition, passive

<sup>1</sup> In the case of St. Mary Woolchurch, which was not rebuilt, bricks and chalk fetched £4, hard and soft stones £105 11s. 0d., and 'remaining' stones and bricks £50: (*Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 306). No general estimate can be given. The amount of the stonework in the burnt churches varied widely. In some cases only the tower was so built, the rest of the building being of clunch faced with plaster; in others the proportion of stone was higher. Some of the ruins, like those of St. Christopher le Stocks, St. Margaret Pattens, and Allhallows the Great, were in good enough condition to be repaired for temporary use; whilst others were standing, though not too securely. By 1668 many of the ruins had become dangerous, and on May 5th the surveyors were ordered to view them and report what parts were in danger of falling: (*Repert.*, 73, f. 159). Orders had already been given for parts of some of them to be taken down - St. Martin Vintry on January 13th, 1668, St. Margaret Moses on April 14th - and a number of others followed. When giving them the City was always careful to stipulate that the materials should either be preserved or sold to help towards the cost of rebuilding.

<sup>2</sup> Lambeth Library, MS. 670, printed in full in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. xvii, pp. 105-24. The figures for the whole rebuilding are not given in it, the period covered being that from the clearing of the ground in 1674 to Michaelmas 1700, when the dome had still to be erected. The total expended in this time was £440,590 17s. 1½d., of which the amounts on the various stones mentioned above were: Portland (ex freight) £28,065 16s. 7½d.; other constructional stone £39,101 11s. 4½d.; hassock and rubble, £97 9s. 1d.; chalk, £913 7s. 4½d.; ragstone £3387 6s. 6d. The price of all the items save the first presumably included carriage and delivery.

(Since the above was written, the Wren Society have completed their publication of the accounts for the building of the whole cathedral. These are distributed over three volumes, xiii-xv (Oxford, 1936-38). An analysis of the cost of the various kinds of stone gives the following figures:

Portland, £37,927 10s. 2½d., and freight, £43,429 9s. 9½d.; Burford, £21,475 17s. 8d.; Headington, £11,859 8s. 6½d.; Reigate, £9,119 12s. 4d.; Guildford, £303 1s. 8d.; Beer, £3,431 19s. 1½d.; Tadcaster, £35 1s. 4d.; Ketton, £816 10s. 10d.; Caen, £498 18s. 10d.; Kent, £4,846 2s. 4d.; Chalk, £1,207 18s. 4½d.

The price of all save the first item included delivery to wharf in London: (vol. xv, pp. xvi, xxxix).



was often appreciable,<sup>1</sup> but even when supplemented from the 35 which were suppressed, they could do little to meet the great quantities required.

The figures for St. Paul's have survived to illustrate both the extent of the demand and the quarries from which it was met.<sup>2</sup> All kinds of stone were used, from imported marble of various kinds to chalk and rubble, but by far the largest quantity was drawn from Portland: 50,322 tons were bought from the island, and to obtain them the builders had to secure from the Crown the grant of special quarries, construct roads and piers for working them, and defeat the opposition, passive

<sup>1</sup> In the case of St. Mary Woolchurch, which was not rebuilt, bricks and chalk fetched £4, hard and soft stones £105 11s. 0d., and 'remaining' stones and bricks £50: (*Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 306). No general estimate can be given. The amount of the stonework in the burnt churches varied widely. In some cases only the tower was so built, the rest of the building being of clunch faced with plaster; in others the proportion of stone was higher. Some of the ruins, like those of St. Christopher le Stocks, St. Margaret Pattens, and Allhallows the Great, were in good enough condition to be repaired for temporary use; whilst others were standing, though not too securely. By 1668 many of the ruins had become dangerous, and on May 5th the surveyors were ordered to view them and report what parts were in danger of falling: (*Report.*, 73, f. 159). Orders had already been given for parts of some of them to be taken down - St. Martin Vintry on January 13th, 1668, St. Margaret Moses on April 14th - and a number of others followed. When giving them the City was always careful to stipulate that the materials should either be preserved or sold to help towards the cost of rebuilding.

<sup>2</sup> Lambeth Library, MS. 670, printed in full in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. xvii, pp. 105-24. The figures for the whole rebuilding are not given in it, the period covered being that from the clearing of the ground in 1674 to Michaelmas 1700, when the dome had still to be erected. The total expended in this time was £440,590 17s. 1½d., of which the amounts on the various stones mentioned above were: Portland (ex freight) £28,065 16s. 7½d.; other constructional stone £39,101 11s. 4½d.; hassock and rubble, £97 9s. 1d.; chalk, £913 7s. 4½d.; ragstone £3387 6s. 6d. The price of all the items save the first presumably included carriage and delivery.

(Since the above was written, the Wren Society have completed their publication of the accounts for the building of the whole cathedral. These are distributed over three volumes, XIII-XV (Oxford, 1936-38). An analysis of the cost of the various kinds of stone gives the following figures:

Portland, £37,927 10s. 2½d., and freight, £43,429 9s. 9½d.; Burford, £21,475 17s. 8d.; Headington, £11,859 8s. 6½d.; Reigate, £9,119 12s. 4d.; Guildford, £303 1s. 8d.; Beer, £3,431 19s. 1½d.; Tadcaster, £35 1s. 4d.; Ketton, £816 10s. 10d.; Caen, £498 18s. 10d.; Kent, £4,846 2s. 4d.; Chalk, £1,207 18s. 4½d.

The price of all save the first item included delivery to wharf in London: (vol. xv, pp. xvi, xxxix).



and otherwise, of the local inhabitants. A regular fleet of small ships was employed as transport from the workings to London, the freight charges alone amounting to nearly £29,000, in addition to lighterage and haulage charges in London itself. Water transport, however, was a pre-requisite to the use of large quantities of any kind of bulky material, and the other types of stone were almost all accessible by river or by sea. 25,573 $\frac{3}{4}$  tons were used for constructional purposes in addition to the Portland stone already described. These were drawn in unspecified amounts from Burford and Headington in Oxfordshire, Beer in Devonshire, Reigate and Guildford in Surrey, Tadcaster in Yorkshire, Ketton in Rutland, and Caen. In addition various inferior stones were used for subsidiary purposes. Kent supplied 498 $\frac{1}{2}$  tons of hassock and rubble, and the 5587 $\frac{1}{2}$  tons of chalk which was used instead of rubble probably also came from there. 10,884 tons of ragstone were used, though whether this includes the large quantities sold to the City is not made clear. Paving required marble from Ireland, and Welsh and Torbay stone, besides the familiar supplies from Purbeck, whilst £1744 14s. 7d. was spent on marble for pillars and £59 7s. 4d. on Denmark and Swedish stone, for various purposes, including paving.<sup>1</sup> Altogether, the cost of the stone and its transport to the site of the new cathedral amounted to some £120,000 out of a total expenditure for all purposes during the period covered of £444,000. Once there, 'masonry, raising and Setting new work w<sup>t</sup> Sawing Portland Stone' cost a further £120,000.

As more than fifty churches were adding their quotas to the demand,<sup>2</sup> it is easy to realize why the proprietors of some

<sup>1</sup> The items, which are not all distinguished, run as follows: '5304 Paviers for the Choir (£994 10s. od.); 622 for do. Welch and Torbay (£75); 22 for bordering (£5 10s. od.); Irish marble for Steps . . . (£718 13s. 3d.), for Paving . . . (£34 14s. 6d.); Purbeck paving . . . (£10)'. The marble probably came from Sicily or from Italy, for in 1694 £2 16s. od. was spent on obtaining an order to Admiral Russell in the Straits to take marble aboard the King's ships. A note adds that nothing was actually brought by this method.

<sup>2</sup> See *Archaeologia*, LXVI, pp. 15-22, and the transcript of the complete bills for St. Mary le Bow and St. Stephen's Walbrook on pp. 23-60. The transcripts indicate that those churches were using the same kinds of stone as St. Paul's.

of the Oxfordshire quarries found it worth their while to become freemen of the city.<sup>1</sup> Apart from St. Paul's, the City's demand was maintained for ten years and the parish churches' for over thirty, whilst for such stones as Purbeck paving there was also a general demand from the ordinary dwelling-house.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to the length of time over which it was spread, the quarrying and transporting industries were able to meet it. They must have prospered, but they do not appear to have profiteered, and at the end of it all London was endowed with better public buildings than ever before in her history.

If the Fire gave London excellent public buildings of stone, it also caused the conversion of her ordinary houses from lath and plaster into brick, and so presented her with another problem of supplies. In this case, however, because the regulations gave no practicable alternative and delay was anathema, there could be no spreading of demand. Like timber, bricks and tiles had to be provided with all possible speed and, as with stone, considerations of transport limited the possible sources to places within a few miles either of London or of a convenient waterway. There was, however, the consolation that, whilst the city's demands had long exhausted the supplies of timber in its vicinity, large areas of brick-earth had remained untouched.<sup>3</sup> Given adequate coal, these resources could now be used, thus ensuring not only the retention by Londoners of the profits from both manufacture and transport but also an almost painless expansion of the

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Kempster, who was made a freeman by redemption in July 1670, was the owner of a quarry at Burford, and Thomas Strong, who followed him in September 1670, of one at Taynton: (Knoop and Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 43n and 45n). Both, in their petitions for the freedom, declared that they had been engaged in the rebuilding since the time of the Fire. Thomas's brother, Edward Strong, became a freeman in 1680.

<sup>2</sup> It was used for kitchen floors – see *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 84, Oliver's *Surveys*, I, f. 196, and *Guildhall Recs.*, Deeds 94-3.

<sup>3</sup> Brick-making had of course long been an industry of the London area. Charles I had attempted to regulate it, and had actually prohibited it within one mile of the gates of the city and of his palace at Westminster (proclamation dated July 16th, 1630). The records of London Bridge show that regular purchases were being made, 250 years before the Fire, of bricks and tiles made at Deptford: (*Bridgemasters' Account Books*, 1404-21, II, *passim*).

receipts from the coal dues. How far development in the London area met the demand cannot be estimated. Some supplies must have been imported from abroad.<sup>1</sup> The relaxation of the Navigation Act covered bricks and tiles as well as timber, and before the end of October 1666 the Privy Council had been petitioned by merchants who had contracted for the supply, from Norway, Westphalia and 'other places' of timber, brick, iron, tiles and building materials 'to the value of five or six thousand pounds'.<sup>2</sup> But probably a great part came from the neighbourhood of London. Capital and labour were there in plenty, and the urgent demands for coals for brick-making confirm the obvious supposition that development went on apace.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately such supplies were not taxed, and therefore not recorded, whilst the outward progress of London has long covered the lands from which they were drawn. Yet, though the brickpits have been filled in and built over and no record has come down of the report of the committee appointed by the City to view convenient ground for making bricks,<sup>4</sup> chance has left clues to three of the areas used. One of these was in the parish of St. Giles in the Fields, and another near the windmills in Moorfields. In each of these places the tenants were fully alive to the profits they might reap from Charles's declaration, for, if the new city was to be built of brick, pits situated so close at hand must surely pay. Some therefore petitioned for leave to infringe the covenant in their leases

<sup>1</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, pp. 177, 192-3.

<sup>2</sup> The United Provinces and the Spanish Netherlands both sent supplies, the Port Books recording shipments from (*inter alia*) Amsterdam, Dort, Flushing, Nieuport, and Rotterdam. The books are damaged, and also give no help about the ultimate destination of the cargoes detailed, but some of the shipments must have been used for rebuilding in the city, as distinct from building in the London area. The figures for March, May and July in 1669, the great year for house-building, are: March, 53,000 pantiles, 20,000 bricks, 7000 brickstones; May, 47,500 pantiles; July, 13,500 pantiles. The fact that views of the city do not show houses roofed with pantiles suggests, however, that the Low Countries did not form a main source of supply for the rebuilding.

<sup>3</sup> During the winter of 1666 and the first six months of 1667 the Privy Council was actively concerned to promote the sailing of colliers for this purpose, as well as for the fuelling of London.

<sup>4</sup> *For.*, 46, f. 130.

## LABOUR AND MATERIALS FOR REBUILDING

The value of the Act in the matter of supplies might be debatable, but there could be no doubt of the advantages derived from its standardization of design. If the citizen could justly attribute much of his freedom from the handicap of rising costs to the work of natural causes, he could not possibly question the help given by the regulation of the mode of his rebuilding, and whatever loss he may have sustained by the sacrifice of his freedom to design, he certainly made up in speed of construction. In many important respects the Act designed his house for him. The height of the storeys, thickness of the walls, and front elevation; the materials to be used, the permissible scantlings, and the relationship of floor and street levels, were all laid down.<sup>1</sup> Given the dimensions and situation of a plot, a builder could estimate to a nicety the main cost of the house which could be built on it. Discussion of its construction could be confined to details, and the bulk of the contract for rebuilding condensed into brief references to the Act. John Oliver, noting down the particulars of three houses for which he was to supply a design, mentioned only that there were to be cisterns, Purbeck paving, sinks in each kitchen, and leaden funnels to each house of office. All the rest was comprehended in the phrase 'according to the Act for rebuilding of the Second Sort of building'.<sup>2</sup> When it came to an actual agreement there was the same economy. The contract between George Ligoë as owner and Thomas Woodstocke and Nicholas Stapell as builders<sup>3</sup> whereby the two latter agreed to build a pair of houses on Fish Street Hill simply provided for 'two good and substantiall Messeges . . . of the third sort . . . mentioned in the late act of Parliament'. Being drawn with the utmost caution, it amplified this in connection with every part of the work to which the Act applied. It stipulated that they

<sup>1</sup> Ss. 1, 3, 5, 7-12, together with the scantlings and general rules at the end of the Act.

<sup>2</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 84, Oliver's *Surveys*, I, f. 196.

<sup>3</sup> *Guildhall Recs.*, Deeds 94, 3. It is interesting to note that whilst Ligoë is described as 'citizen and merchant taylor', the two builders, who are definite contractors, were apparently immigrants, for they are given no description whatever.

were to be 'of such length of Stories and thicknesse of Walls and with such Timber and Materiall for the Nature and quality thereof and of such dementions and scantlings as by the said Act . . . is and are set down prescribed and appointed . . . together with the party walls that ought to be between each Builders ground according to the sayd Act'. It laid down that the builders were to provide all materials and labour necessary to complete the houses 'according to the generall rules directions and prescriptions of the . . . Act', and, passing from the general to the particular, settled such complicated detailed work as the balcony looking on to the street, the stall on the ground floor, and the guttering from the roof, with references to the provisions of the same Act. Finally the builders were strictly bound to indemnify Ligoe against all penalties or troubles which might be sustained by him by reason of the work failing in any way to conform to the regulations. Even the amount to be paid was to be finally ascertained through measurements made by the surveyors appointed under the Act.

The help given to the citizens by such standardization can easily be imagined. It eased the arrangement of contracts and the supplying of materials, lessened the possibility of bad or fraudulent workmanship, and reduced the time taken in building. If Ligoe, who was careful to stipulate that the mortar should be 'without mixture of sifted Rubbish', had felt bound to treat every detail with the same meticulousness his contract would have been endless. As it was, he relied on the Act. It set the standards to be maintained, the City enforced them, and the private citizen reaped the benefit. Apart from the improvements made in the general level of housing, and the sensible reduction in the risk of fire, the new city was actually rebuilt more rapidly and with greater ease by reason of the regulations worked out by the King's and the City's commissioners. The burden of enforcement weighed heavily on the City, but the results were worth far more than the price paid for them.

The same verdict may be passed on most of the clauses directly designed to facilitate private rebuilding. They seem to have worked admirably, if at the cost of great labour and trouble for the City. Designed for the most part either to prevent disputes or to provide for their speedy settlement, they were linked by a common motive — the greatest possible acceleration of building — with others facilitating the establishment or transfer of title. For the first category the authors of the Acts<sup>1</sup> envisaged the various causes of friction and sought to minimize them. Starting with provisions for the delimitation of party walls — a matter of high importance where houses were contiguous and sites narrow — they continued through a list in which problems of lights and of the enforcement of drainage rights were given special attention. Party walls were to be set out by the City surveyors, and by them only. They were to be taken equally from each man's ground, and until the delimitation had been carried out, neither owner was permitted to build. Once it had been done, either side could begin. The first to do so had to build the wall entire, leaving toothing to assist the second. The second, when his turn came, was compelled to pay for half the cost, with six per cent per annum interest thereon, his rebuilding being forbidden until the payment had been made.<sup>2</sup> The scheme was ingenious. It prevented that sure begetter of litigation, the removal of a neighbour's landmark, and it prevented the delays which would have arisen had each owner been compelled to come to an agreement with those on either side of him before he could start work on his site. Once the extent of the wall had been fixed, both parties were safe. Neither need fear encroachment, and, since repayment was assured, it mattered little to the first builder when the second began. He was protected from an unreasonable or obstructive neighbour, and, better still, if the

<sup>1</sup> The first Act had to be supplemented by a second, 22 Charles II, c. 11: 'An Additional Act for the Rebuilding of the City of London, Uniting of Parishes and Rebuilding of the Cathedral and Parochial Churches within the said City', see below, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> First Act, s. 6. The city's draft Bill had contained the same provision.

ownership was divided and interests conflicting, he had not to reconcile them in order to obtain an agreement allowing him to start. Should there be a dispute as to the value of the wall it was provided that the Alderman of the Ward and his deputy should be called in to mediate. If they failed, or if one was concerned as a party, the matter was to be settled, without appeal, by the court of Aldermen.<sup>1</sup>

Disputes about the placing or stopping of lights, windows, watercourses<sup>2</sup> and gutters could not be prevented at the outset, as could those about party walls. Unless the City attempted to control the detail of every man's plans for rebuilding they were bound to occur. As such control was clearly impossible, the most that could be done was to ensure that they should be settled as easily as possible. They were therefore brought under the provisions for disputes about party walls.<sup>3</sup> Quick, cheap, and directed by actual personal knowledge of site, locality and disputants, this method was admirably designed for the convenience of the citizens. With appeals ruled out, with no obscuring technicalities of procedure, and with few chances for the introduction of delays, the poor could use it as easily as the rich. Nobody was debarred from it and, granted that it was honestly and impartially carried out, it could hardly have been bettered.<sup>4</sup> Confirmation of its value and of its popularity were given when the second Act adopted it for almost every other cause of trouble, extending it to cover 'all Differences which shall or may arise concerning the misplacing, straitening, or stopping up, or any ways obstructing any com-

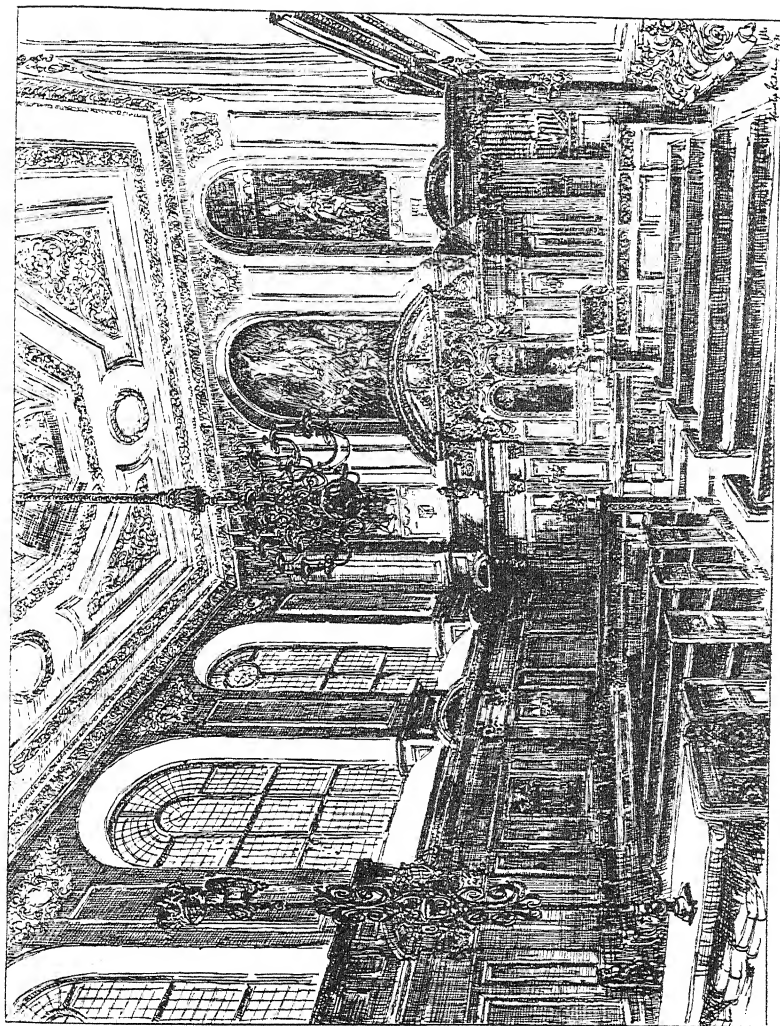
<sup>1</sup> First Act, s. 6, and second Act, s. 14.

<sup>2</sup> I.e., all artificial channels for the conveyance of water. In the absence of a comprehensive system of public sewers and drains, any established right to a drain through a neighbour's ground was an asset of great value. Rebuilding carried out at different times and with changes in the pre-Fire ground plans was certain to cause the stopping or diversion of many of them.

<sup>3</sup> First Act, s. 17, and second Act, s. 14.

<sup>4</sup> It should be remembered, however, that it shared the common weakness of all decisions at this period, whether made by the Crown or a lesser authority, by the executive or the judiciary, namely that a resolute offender might long defy their execution. This could not possibly be eliminated – it was a triumph to have eliminated the delays by which such offenders normally postponed the gaining of a decision.





THE MERCERS' CHAPEL, CHEAPSIDE



mon or private Entries, Alleys, Ways, Stairs, Landing Places, or Passages, Houses of Office, Tunnels, Draughts, and other Easements, heretofore used and enjoyed within the . . . City of London, or the Liberties thereof'.<sup>1</sup> The groaning Aldermen, already harried to distraction by disputes whose causes were infinite and duration little less, took up the extra burden and bore it with skill. No portraits commemorate their work, but London has good cause to remember it with gratitude.

The creation of this device for mediation, backed by the threat of summary jurisdiction, did not end the work either of Parliament or of the Aldermen. The Acts were equally concerned to ensure that building should not be retarded by any complication of interests. These could arise either from houses to which were annexed rooms in those adjoining, or from those in which the inheritance was divided. Both were common. The owner of several houses might sell outright the shops on the ground floor of one or more of them, or, to enlarge his premises, buy rooms in a neighbour's. A father might leave his property in divided ownership or devise it in such a way that many were interested and none in sole control. Frame houses were easily altered. Devoid of brick-built interior walls, a single room, or a whole story could readily be transferred to a neighbour. The most important unit in their construction, the long beam, was not affected by such changes, and they were therefore made as convenience dictated. The burnt city had been the heir to generations of them and, in consequence, ownerships were greatly intermixed, and disputes could easily arise. If building was to proceed without delay or interruption, they had to be disposed of, and, if it was to proceed as the new regulations demanded, with brick party walls, built upright and entire, provision had also to be made for the adjustment of intermingled houses. The latter were referred to the surveyors, subject to an appeal to a final determination by the Court of Aldermen.<sup>2</sup> The former were to be solved, if unanimity was impossible, by allowing any interested

<sup>1</sup> Second Act, s. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 5.

party who was desirous to rebuild to undertake the work for all and then to enjoy it until the remainder had satisfied him for their proportion of the cost with interest at six per cent per annum for the intervening time. If at the end of two years they had failed to do so, the rebuilder might buy them out at a reasonable valuation. All differences concerning the value of the work, or of the interests of those refusing to pay for it, were to be settled by the method used for intermingled houses.<sup>1</sup>

By these means every conceivable dispute was provided with a quick and an easy method for its settlement. They were not, however, ways which could be applied to those in which the City was itself concerned either by estate or by title. These had to receive special treatment. The principle of speed was preserved, but the jurisdiction was transferred, again without appeal, to the Judges of the Fire Court.<sup>2</sup> For this, and for other matters for which the City machinery was not suitable, the Court's powers were enlarged to provide still more means for the facilitation of rebuilding. It was authorized to hear cases in which one of the parties could not be found,<sup>3</sup> to grant rebuilding leases where an estate lay in an infant or its trustees,<sup>4</sup> and to treat as though they were Fire cases disputes about houses burnt within the city during the three years preceding the actual Fire, or demolished to safeguard the Tower against the spreading flames.<sup>5</sup> Other clauses strengthened the binding power of its decrees<sup>6</sup> and remedied anomalies in its position.<sup>7</sup> Even so there remained points at which legislation could smoothen the way to rebuilding, and the Act went on to indemnify builders against secret charges and encumbrances on their sites, and to cover the loss of title deeds. The former, if pre-Fire, were valid only to the amount that the unbuilt site would satisfy:<sup>8</sup> for the latter it was provided that a lease from a reputed owner who had been in lawful possession for at least

<sup>1</sup> Second Act, s. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., s. 68.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., s. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., s. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., ss. 31, 73.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., ss. 23, 26-8.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., ss. 21, 29.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., s. 44. The proviso did not apply if they had been contracted by the then owner, or others interested therein.

twenty-one years should be valid even if the ownership was later reversed.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, tenants in tail, or with a life interest, were enabled to grant building leases up to a term of fifty years which were to be binding on their successors in tenure.<sup>2</sup> Special provision was also made for the leasing of glebe lands.<sup>3</sup>

In all, besides the separate act for the Fire Court, the authors of the rebuilding Acts designed some thirty clauses to help or to expedite rebuilding by private persons. That done, they somewhat pessimistically inserted a clause authorizing the City to take action in the case of tofts which were left unbuilt. If that did occur; if, in spite of every aid that had been devised, men did not get their former houses rebuilt; if the judges' time, the Companies' privileges, and the City's labours had all been sacrificed in vain — then the interests of the community were to be asserted and the laggards were to be required by public proclamation either to build within nine months or to forfeit their right to do so. If at the end of that time they had still failed to respond, a specially impanelled jury was to value their sites, and they were to be sold by the City at the figure named to anybody who was ready to use them for building. Even so, it was not a question of penalization. The proceeds of the sales were to be paid into the Chamber, but they were to be paid out again if an owner came forward with proof of his title.<sup>4</sup> It was rather the final assertion of the

<sup>1</sup> Second Act, s. 45. To prevent frauds, the rent in the lease had to be approved by the City. I have only found one instance in which this clause was used, and that very shortly after its passage: (July 12th, 1670; *Repert.*, 75, f. 271).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 71.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 67.

<sup>4</sup> S. 13 of the first Act provided for this procedure to begin three years after the Fire. When the time came, it was plain that the pace of the rebuilding had been over-estimated. It was therefore twice postponed — until March 24th, 1672, by s. 70 of the second Act, and then until Michaelmas 1672 by s. 4 of 22 & 23 Charles II, c. 14. After that date it was utilized on a number of occasions. The intricacies of the City records hid this from Mr. Bell's keen eyes, leading him to declare that its only use was that of a threat (W. G. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 245n), but *Journals*, 48-50, *passim*, give many instances. The conveyances of some of the tofts that were sold because the proclamations had been disregarded may be found in the *Guildhall Records*: (Deeds 27, Nos. 8 11, 13-16).

principle behind all the rebuilding laws. London could not be allowed to lie waste. It had to be rebuilt as soon as possible. If there were proprietors who would not, or could not, do their share, then their rights would have to be valued and cancelled. They were to be paid off so that the community could go on.

## ADMINISTERING THE REBUILDING ACTS

## § 1

IN contrast with the private builder, for whom everything possible was done, the City was left with everything to do and very little to help it in so doing. Taken together, the intentions of the two Rebuilding Acts may reasonably be summarized as twofold — firstly to facilitate a rebuilding by private enterprise, unsubsidized and subjected to stringent regulations for improving both the streets and the houses which lined them, and secondly to enforce a number of public improvements applying alike to the lay-out and to the life of the city. Each of these entailed endless additional work for someone, and in each case that someone was the City. On it fell the whole task of administering, negotiating and enforcing the provisions of the Acts, and to it must be given the praise for most of their success. Parliament imposed safeguards. The City had to render strict account of the funds it was authorized to collect, and to provide free access to records of certain of its transactions. An aggrieved party could always appeal against it to the King in Council. But, subject to the compulsory election of surveyors,<sup>1</sup> it was left to devise its own machinery and to use its own methods. Parliament, in fact, made no novel attempt to create a royal or a national administrative authority to take over the control of affairs. The King offered the services of his commissioners, and the Privy Council appointed a committee to deal with all matters relating to the rebuilding,<sup>2</sup> but these

<sup>1</sup> As this was only the formal adoption of the proposal contained in the City's draft Act, and as the City itself did the electing, it was not an instance of outside interference.

<sup>2</sup> After the passage of the first Act, the King's commissioners were mainly used to investigate and report on such difficulties and complaints about the staking out of the streets as were brought by petition before the Council (see the cases of St. Martin's le Grand, Blowbladder Street, St. Paul's School, and the precinct of St. Anne Blackfriars in *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59 — 2/61 *passim*). After the second, Wren was freely consulted

were moves of a secondary importance. The real work fell to the City.

This was neither an unaccountable omission on the part of Parliament, nor a case of deliberate discrimination against the City. On the contrary to have suggested any outside control would have been immediately and bitterly opposed by Aldermen and Common Council alike.<sup>1</sup> By continuous effort extending at least since the Norman Conquest London had gained that control over its own internal government which was the object of every medieval town. No emergency could, in a moment of time, reverse the slow development of those five hundred years. In dealing with the catastrophe, as its draft Act showed, the City was true to normal human instincts. It clung tightly to what was already known, asking, not for an intrusion from outside, but for an extension of its own powers to enable it to deal with an unprecedented situation. Some of these powers were given and some withheld, but, whatever changes were introduced, Parliament made no attempt to intervene in what was universally accepted as the City's peculiar field. The rebuilding of London was carried through by the government of London. The authority which in the spring of 1667 began anxiously to test the equipment provided was the ordinary, normal, governing body of the city. London was meeting the greatest crisis in its history not merely out of

<sup>1</sup> When Charles suggested that, in order to further the rebuilding, a new post should be created, that of Surveyor General for the Rebuilding of the City, and that so acceptable a person as the then Lord Mayor should be elected to it, the Common Council jealously replied that there was no need for such an officer. This answer was returned after the King had repeated his suggestion, and at a time when the City urgently needed his favour: (see p. 55, note 2).

by the City about the Fleet scheme and the waterline. His help was valued and, as he was then Surveyor-General and the King would confer with him, it was necessary to have his agreement before embarking on any scheme in which the King was concerned. But apparently it was only in the actual processes of rebuilding the churches that he had a definite administrative responsibility.

The rebuilding committee of the Privy Council continued to be called on for special purposes: for example, on April 1st, 1668, it presented various (unspecified) alterations and amendments which it considered necessary to the second rebuilding Bill: (*P.C. Reg.*, 2/60, p. 250). But it only dealt with matters which were specifically referred to it.

its own financial but also, and this time by its express wish, out of its own administrative resources. When estimating the work which was done, this must always be borne in mind.

The difficulty of a task sufficiently formidable, to take a comparable example, to tax the strength of all Japan after the earthquake of 1923,<sup>1</sup> was enhanced by the delay in the passing of the second Rebuilding Act. This delay was not the fault of the City, for it had begun the promotion of a supplementary Bill before the end of 1667.<sup>2</sup> Much of it was attributable to the preoccupations and prorogations of Parliament,<sup>3</sup> some to the manœuvrings of the various parties interested in the amalgamations of the parishes,<sup>4</sup> and some to controversies over

<sup>1</sup> For a description of the measures which had then to be taken, see H. G. Moulton, *Japan: an economic and financial appraisal* (1932).

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 203. On February 12th, 1668, it was ready for counsel to draft. This was to be done and the draft then presented to the King and, after him, to Parliament: (*Jor.*, 46, f. 212).

<sup>3</sup> The Bill had passed through the Commons and reached the committee stage in the Lords by May 8th, 1668. On the day following, Parliament was adjourned, and further adjournments prevented it from meeting again until October 19th, 1669. The City then decided to promote the Bill previously put forward as it would be more likely to be given a rapid passage if presented unaltered. Unfortunately for its hopes, the Houses were prorogued in less than two months, with the Bill still in the committee stage in the Commons. It was again presented at the end of February, and, after a number of alterations, reached the Lords on March 24th. Here it received further alterations, but, on April 9th, it was given its final reading and on the 11th it received the royal assent.

<sup>4</sup> This was a very complicated business. There was general agreement that the number of the churches had to be reduced and absolute unanimity among the parishes against the sacrifice of their own. Jurisdiction and patronage added to the difficulties. A return made in 1667 in connection with this question showed that out of the 94 churches included in it, 77 were under the Bishop of London, 2 under St. Paul's, whilst 13 more were peculiars of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The patrons included the King with 5, the Archbishop with 11 and the Bishop of London with 9. Westminster Abbey and Christchurch, Canterbury, had 3 each, the City and the Companies 9 between them, and St. Paul's had 16. Eighteen of the remainder were shown as uncertain: (B.M., Harleian MS. 4941, ff. 52 *et seq.*).

Some of the churches occupied sites which were essential to the carrying out of improvements. St. Mary Woolchurch was required for the Stocks Market, All Hallows, Honey Lane, and St. Mary Magdalen, Milk Street, for Honey Lane Market, and St. Michael le Querne for the western entrance into Cheapside. But where this urgency did not apply there was in many cases no strong reason for distinguishing between one and another. The threatened parishes petitioned vigorously against the loss of their churches (an excellent example may be seen in *Repert.*, 74, f. 309), and there was a widely spread feeling that preference was being given to the great powers rather than to the city's convenience. Pepys, hearing that the City's Bill had passed in the

the actual difficulties to be solved. But, whatever the cause, the City was the chief sufferer. The bulk of the private citizens were not troubled. Some were denied for a while the payment due to them for land taken into the streets,<sup>1</sup> others lost through the temporary lapsing of the Fire Court at the end of 1668, and some must have missed the various extra facilities granted by the second Act; but, inevitably, it was the authority responsible for administering the rebuilding which suffered most. Fortunately, Charles was alive to the difficulties imposed by the delay, and concerned to minimize them. In consequence, when the Act did eventually become law, and the gaps in the first Act were filled, an appreciable part of its provisions did no more than legalize what the City with the King's consent and authority, was already doing. But, although co-operation had reduced them, the difficulties had been there, and at a time when they could least easily be borne.

As we have seen, the City dealt vigorously with the first of its tasks, the decision about street-widening, but this was only a preliminary to the work which was to follow. Each of the various reforms appointed by the Acts entailed two difficult, and quite distinct, phases. The City had first to decide what was to be done, and then, when the means had been agreed upon and any necessary sanction obtained, to carry its decision through. The first of these phases was sufficiently laborious, but it was as nothing compared with the second. For the purposes of the first such matters as the choice of new places for markets, the changes to be made in the levels and gradients of

<sup>1</sup> For example, Isabella Merrick, a widow, owned a house on the west corner of St. Mary-hill at its junction with Thames Street. 202 square feet were cut off from it to enlarge the first, and 162 to enlarge the second. The surveyor's certificate, issued in 1669, noted that payment could be made for the 162 feet, but that the amount staked for St. Mary-hill could not be paid until the second Act had passed: (*C.L.P.*, 1669).

Commons, regretted that he had not urged anyone to move that the churches should be allotted according to the convenience of the people and not 'to gratify this Bishop, or that College': (*Diary*, May 6th, 1668). In its final form the Act paid the fullest respect to the various rights in the suppressed churches. Each of the united parishes retained its own organization and looked after its own affairs, and patrons presented by rota.



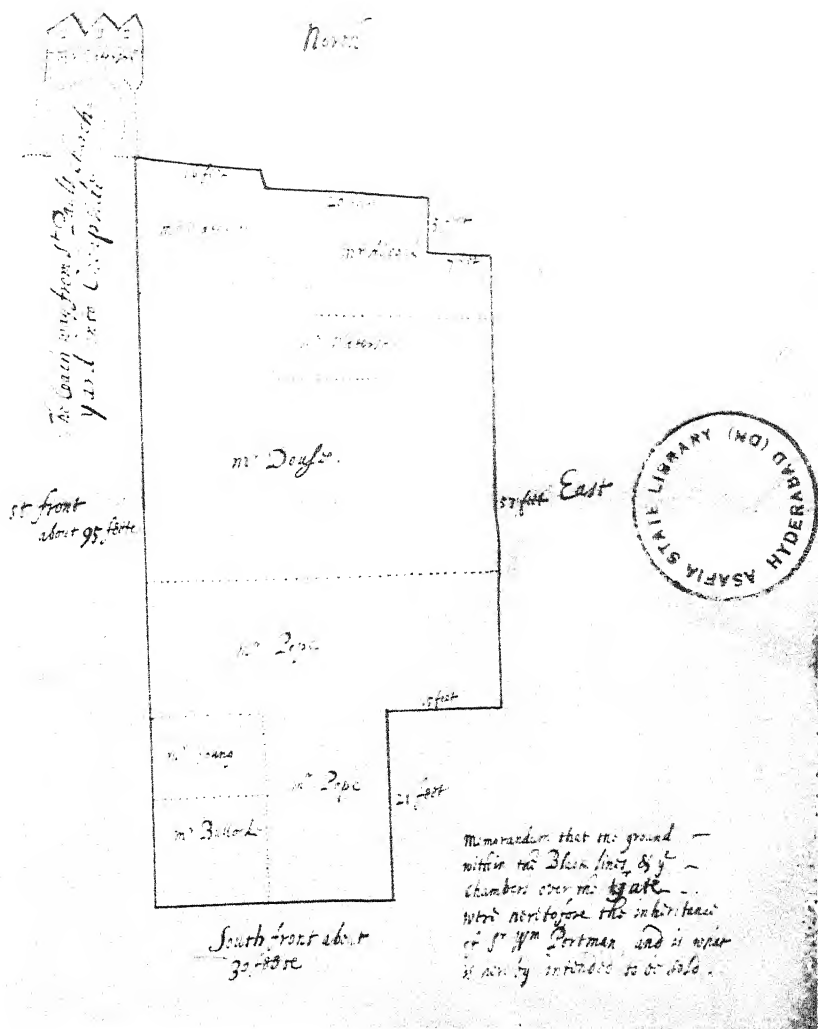
the various streets, or the alterations to be made to the public conduits, could be delegated to small committees. The work was hard, for the problems were hard, but it could safely be dealt with by half a dozen of the Aldermen and Common Councilmen, helped by the surveyors. Once their report had been submitted and adopted, however, the first phase was ended, and the second entered upon. This meant that the whole organization of the City had to be brought into action, involving work for everyone connected with it. Even in the case of the markets, perhaps the easiest of the examples taken, from the first negotiations for the land, to the completion of the new market-houses, from the closing down of the old to the setting out of the new, there was little which could be classed as routine,<sup>1</sup> and much which could give rise to disputes. Disagreements began at once — about the value of the land, the design of the market-houses, or the ordering of the stalls inside them — and the examples could be multiplied on paper as they multiplied before the eyes of the wearied Aldermen. Nor did these mark the end of their troubles. Interests were bound to be prejudiced by the changes, and in many cases they struggled against them. These struggles created further problems. The City was not simply administering a series of mandatory reforms, worked out to the last immutable detail. It was not even a dictator with plenary powers. It was legislature, executive and judiciary rolled into one, but it was not absolute and its works could be questioned either in the courts or before the Privy Council. It had to plan, to carry out and to enforce, but it was a representative body, and it had also to alleviate. If a conduit was discontinued, the water-bearers attached to it would be ruined; if a market was placed under a new administration, the old staff would be left penniless; if a gradient was altered, half the houses in the street might find that their water-courses were rendered useless.

<sup>1</sup> This factor deserves much more emphasis than it usually receives. An official can, without great difficulty, substantially increase the amount of routine work done per day, but work which demands thought, and not simply attention, must be done slowly if it is to be done well.

Those injured by the changes appealed by petition either for their reversal or for relief. Such petitions could not be ignored, yet monetary compensation was often out of the question. Plans had to be altered, and work done over again. The City was troubled, hampered, restricted, by a thousand considerations, minor in comparison with the main object, but vital to the people concerned. It could not drive straight forward: it had always to arbitrate, mediate, amend, compromise. This was the constant background to its work under the Acts. The subjects changed but the troubles remained. It had, for example, been hard enough to decide which streets should be widened and to what dimensions, but it was even harder to preserve those decisions intact. Directly men were able to 'observe the . . . streets in the city . . . marked out with piles drove into the ground', they were able also to observe what the effects upon their own sites would be. Some accepted them with resignation, others did not. Petitions flowed in upon the City, some from individual owners on whom a loss bore particularly heavily, others from a whole neighbourhood fearing for the destruction of its amenities. In Water Lane, near the Tower, for example, William Wheatley was moved by the loss of a strip seven feet in depth along a frontage of sixty yards to urge that the staking should be carried out at the expense of the opposite side of the street.<sup>1</sup> He appears to have failed, but John Saunders, who was similarly affected, was successful in obtaining a substantial reduction in the width proposed for Fetter Lane.<sup>2</sup> In Huggen Lane, Wood Street, the protest was general. The inhabitants feared that, if opened to fourteen feet, the lane would become a regular route for carts, and, as they had no wish to see the paving broken up and their own doorways rendered unsafe, they petitioned that the so-called 'improvement' might be rescinded. Since there was an alternative route close at hand, the City was sympathetic, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 72, f. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 112. As it was ordered at first the lane would have been made twenty feet wide. His petition caused it to be reduced to sixteen. Even this did not satisfy one of his neighbours, but the City refused to sanction any further reduction.



A PLAN OF LAND ACQUIRED FOR WIDENING THE ENTRANCE FROM ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD INTO CHEAPSIDE. THE SKETCH SHOWS THE PRE-FIRE GATEWAY

inhabitants triumphed.<sup>1</sup> Where there was greater public need and less unanimity, it was more difficult to reach a solution. Close by, in Gutter Lane, the inhabitants were so divided that the surveyors had to be sent to try to bring about some agreement between them. Even this was not immediately successful. Somebody stood out, and the surveyors were ordered not to set out the foundations until that particular recalcitrant had agreed to sell his interest.<sup>2</sup>

Where these comparatively minor streets were concerned the City could make modifications if it considered them to be advantageous. The petitions were a nuisance, and their numbers were great enough to force the setting up of a special committee to deal with them.<sup>3</sup> They wasted time, but firmness in most cases and a certain amount of latitude in others sufficed to dispose of them without anything approaching the trouble caused by the case of Hammond *versus* Selby, or the formalities necessary in the case of greater streets. Where a major street, or even a major interest, was concerned, the position had to be dealt with formally. The City dare not alter what had been proposed to and authorized by the King, and aggrieved parties therefore went to him direct. Only if he agreed, could the City safely concur. In this way Blowbladder Street was amended from the forty feet at which it had been set out, to something rather more than thirty-five. William Coles, the sufferer by the first staking, appealed to the King in Council; the rebuilding committees of the two councils conferred: and the change was sanctioned.<sup>4</sup> Another modification of importance was authorized to accommodate the rebuilding of St. Paul's School opposite the east end of the cathedral,<sup>5</sup> and yet

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 73, f. 299 *et seq.* Anyone who has suffered from the traffic tangles in that warehouse-filled area must rue their success.

<sup>2</sup> *C.L.M.*, f. 81 and f. 75. [This book, where folio'd at all, is folio'd in reverse].

<sup>3</sup> *Repe t.*, 72, f. 118. It was set up on June 11th, 1667, less than a month after the last of the main batches of orders for staking had been given out.

<sup>4</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, p. 499; *Jor.*, 46, f. 171. The King's approval was given on June 17th, 1667.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 2/61, pp. 78-9; *Jor.*, 46, f. 252. The petition was heard and approved by the King on October 28th, 1668.

another reduced St. Martin's Lane, now St. Martin's le Grand, from twenty-four feet to eighteen.<sup>1</sup>

These lawfully raised objections were, however, far less trouble to the City than the various illegal infringements. When a man could see that the staking had rendered valuable sites useless, and yet knew that there was no valid reason for altering it, the temptation to unadvertised infringement was great. It could take the form of moving the stakes themselves,<sup>2</sup> not a difficult task if carried out after dark, when the unlit, ill-policed ruins<sup>3</sup> were avoided by all honest men, or, simpler still, of masking them with building materials and then building out beyond them. Both methods were followed, the second being much the most usual. The risk in either case was not impossibly great, and the reward was large. In the early years when houses were few and scattered, detection was unlikely before the building was far advanced. Even then, proof was not always easy, and conviction difficult to enforce. The City was reluctant to resort to extreme measures against anyone who was setting an example by starting to build, and in ordinary fairness it had to give time for an offender to amend his work. This meant that, after conviction, two months must elapse before further proceedings could even be started. A show of compliance, or skilful delaying, could postpone the issue for thrice as long, and resolute defiance might serve still better. If the offender was fortunate, any of these methods might end

<sup>1</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59 - 2/60, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> This rendered the offender liable to three months' imprisonment or to a fine of £10, with the alternative for persons of low degree of a whipping: (first Act, s. 4). For an instance in a street as important as the entry from Cheapside into St. Paul's Churchyard see *Repert.*, 73, f. 202. This occasioned a general order to the surveyors to rectify any change that they might find.

<sup>3</sup> The authorities, with the ward and parochial organization broken down and the inhabitants scattered, found it difficult to do anything really adequate. 'For want of good watches, no one dares to go in the ruins, after the close of the evening' wrote a correspondent to Williamson in December 1666 (*Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1666-67, p. 340), and Pepys at that time 'going over the ruins in the night . . . rid with . . . sword drawn in the coach': (*Diary*, February 13th, 1667). In the spring of 1668 he still preferred going round by the Wall to taking the direct route through the ruins. In that summer, however, orders were given to institute good watches, at the charge of those who were building: (*For.*, 46, f. 231).

## ADMINISTERING THE REBUILDING ACTS

with the City consenting to modify the street line, in preference to destroying a substantial number of completed houses. The risk, therefore, might be well worth taking, and, in fact, it was successfully taken in a number of cases.<sup>1</sup>

The degree to which the City was thus harassed varied. The infringements were many and differed widely, but a single example will serve to show how great the trouble could be. The protagonists in this particular case were John Hammond and Anthony Selby, draper, both of them rich men and redoubtable litigants. Each had had the temerity to appeal against a decision of the Fire Court, and each had had judgment and costs given against him.<sup>2</sup> Both owned extensive and valuable property in Mincing Lane and St. Dunstan's Hill, and both had lost several feet by the staking. But whereas Hammond was content to abide by his loss, and began his rebuilding along the new line, Selby took steps to get the staking altered. Those steps were at Hammond's expense, and Hammond was a dangerous person to injure. He at once petitioned the City for redress and, to make sure that it did not procrastinate, went also to the King in Council.<sup>3</sup> His plea to the latter set out the position with admirable clarity. The surveyors, accompanied by the Deputy and Common Councilmen of the ward, had staked out the lane, taking equally from the ground on each side. He (Hammond) had thereupon caused a platform to be made for two of his houses, in conformity with the new street line, and had contracted for the timber work, the latter being framed and ready at the time of his petition. In his absence, 'Mr. Mills, one of the Surveyors . . . without any

<sup>1</sup> There is a particularly good example in *Repert.*, 73, ff. 115, 206. Illustrated with a sketch map, it is more comprehensible than most.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 96 above. The Judges, when awarding costs against Selby, expressly added 'as it appears . . . that the said appeale is brought without any just cause and that thereby the said Defend[an]ts have beene putt to unnecessary trouble and Charge'. The identification of the Anthony Selby of this case with the one who put the City to so much unnecessary trouble and charge cannot be absolutely established, but it is more than probable.

<sup>3</sup> *Repert.*, 72, f. 142; *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, p. 509. His petition to the City was dealt with on July 16th, 1667. As the staking had not been ordered until May 16th, both he and Selby had acted with unusual speed.

authority, in favour of Mr. Selby, to preserve all his Ground, [did] cause the Stake that was in Mr. Selbys Ground to be plucked out, and placed without his foundaçon & drave one new stake four foote into the Pet<sup>rs</sup> Ground, whereby the Streete is not only made more crooked, but the Pet<sup>rs</sup> Frame of Timber made uselesse, and his Vault with Wings into Minceing Lane being now full of Wines wilbe lost'. The Council gave him what he sought, an order to the City to examine the matter and to give relief if it was due, or else to report the facts with their opinion on them. The Aldermen debated the position, viewed the ground,<sup>1</sup> and informed Hammond that he could proceed according to the original staking.<sup>2</sup> This was not enough for him, and he petitioned again 'intimating some doubts touching, the validity of [the above] order'.<sup>3</sup> In reply he obtained its re-affirmation, with a definite statement that the alteration in the staking had been 'irregular and against the Act of Parliament for rebuilding the Citty'. With this he was satisfied, and if Selby had been content to accept the position all might have been well. He was not, and four months later Hammond was again before the Council, complaining that, whilst he and others who had already built in Mincing Lane and St. Dunstan's Hill had observed the staking, Selby had not, but had calmly continued to build five feet out into each of them. Hammond and his neighbours, as he declared, had for 'six months past at divers times informed the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the irregularity' and 'from time to time entreated Mr. Hooke [the City Surveyor] to putt a stopp thereunto', 'yet hitherto nothing hath been done effectually to hinder the same' 'so that he [Selby] hath long since finished one of the said Buildings upon St Dunstans Hill, & is now laying on his third floare in Minceing Lane, & both hee, & his workmen give out that they will finish it notwithstanding all Opposition'.<sup>4</sup>

The Council thereupon ordered the City to make a full inquiry upon oath and to put an end to any buildings irregu-

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 72, f. 153.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 155.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 186.

<sup>4</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/60, pp. 149-50.

larly placed. The City obeyed, and it was established that in Mincing Lane Selby's whole frontage of sixty-nine feet was built out into the street by amounts varying from two feet ten inches at the north end to five feet at the south. In St. Dunstan's Hill his offence was even greater. In his absence, for he had refused even to put in an appearance, he was therefore ordered to be bound by recognizances to make the necessary reforms.<sup>1</sup> This moved him to instant action. In a city in which barely five per cent of the houses had been rebuilt his contribution, irregular though it was, was substantial. He knew that the City would be most reluctant to compel him to destroy it, and he played on this weakness, urging that the surveyors should be instructed to see whether a compromise was not possible.<sup>2</sup> The City agreed, but the case was clear. Parliament had laid down that both streets should be made twenty-four feet wide, and the City had no sort of mandate to alter that provision. The affair was threshed out at a full meeting of the Court of Aldermen, the City counsel being called in as impartial advisers. Selby's counsel did his best, but there was no gainsaying the Act, and Selby was given a month in which to reform his buildings, or to be prosecuted under it.<sup>3</sup>

Here the matter should have ended, but Selby was a true representative of his times. On the last day of the allotted month, he in turn petitioned the Privy Council. The step failed. The Council had had enough of the matter and 'Their Lord[shi]pps taking the said Business into serious Consideration, did not think fitt to meddle, or doe anything therein'.<sup>4</sup> In hot haste he turned to the House of Commons, and there he succeeded.<sup>5</sup> When, after an extra week's grace, he was called before the City to account for his failure to amend his buildings, he produced an order from the Commons referring the whole matter to a Committee of that house.<sup>6</sup> This expedient

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 73, ff. 68-9, 79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 83.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 99.

<sup>4</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/60, p. 274. The petition was considered on April 15th, 1668.

<sup>5</sup> *Commons' Journals*, ix, p. 83a.

<sup>6</sup> *Repert.*, 73, f. 116.



gained him two months, and then the City moved again. This time it left nothing to chance. All the Justices of the Peace were ordered to attend, with the surveyors, the parties concerned, and a complete dossier of the case.<sup>1</sup> A month later the hearing was held. Both parties were examined and both were convicted of irregular building, though Hammond's conviction was for breaking the rules for construction and not for infringing the street line. Each was required to enter into the formidable recognizance of £1000 to demolish or to amend within two months. Hammond did so, but Selby steadfastly refused, 'offering his body to Imprisonm<sup>t</sup> rather than to submitt'. The court replied by ordering him to carry out the necessary reforms.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the allotted two months he had not only failed to amend his buildings, but had actually gone on with them. Goaded by this contempt, and pressed by his neighbours, who wished to rebuild and to be instructed how they were to align their buildings,<sup>3</sup> the City delayed no further. Its workmen were ordered to pull down all the irregular work, and, to leave Selby with no loophole for complaint, the surveyors were instructed to see that it was properly done. To prevent him from taking more active measures, orders were also given to the constables to attend if they were required to keep the peace.<sup>4</sup> A week later the workmen set to and did it,<sup>5</sup> Mills noting that all the back parts were built of the prohibited timber.<sup>6</sup> Here again the matter should have ended, but Selby was indomitable. He promptly sued the surveyors and the City workmen in the court of Exchequer. At the hearing the Chief Baron recommended mediation, and, at his request, a committee was set up to 'contrive some expedient for composing the s[ai]d

<sup>1</sup> *Reperi.*, 73, ff. 202, 214.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 240. After this date nothing more is heard of the houses on St. Dunstan's Hill.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 263.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 263-4. This was on September 19th, 1668, nearly fifteen months after the beginning of the trouble.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 75, f. 101v; *City Cash Books*, 1/13, f. 227.

<sup>6</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 84, *Mills's Surveys*, I, f. 145.

suite as they find best and most conducive to the peace and quiet of the City w<sup>th</sup> due regard to the s[ai]d Act of Parliam<sup>t</sup> and for the help and reliefe of the s[ai]d Mr. Selby'.<sup>1</sup> This committee worked for over three months to find such an expedient, finally reporting in favour of procuring a purchaser for the land and the partly finished buildings, thus enabling Selby to get out, without loss, in place of an owner who could be bound in advance to build correctly.<sup>2</sup> Whether such a purchaser could not be found, or whether the City was attracted by the facts then revealed, that Selby had bought the land after the Fire, had paid only £450 for it, and had been earning a handsome return on his money by letting the vaults below it, cannot now be discovered. However, be the reason what it may, the story closed with the City itself becoming the purchaser, paying £2070 for the land and buildings as they stood, spending £600 on completing them according to the Act, and ending up by letting them for twenty-one years at £100 per annum, with a further £100 as a fine.<sup>3</sup>

Whether their bargain was good or not is immaterial. From the City's point of view the moral of the whole affair was plain. They must, if possible, avoid being entangled in many such cases. They could never expect a clearer instance of infringement, and yet, when their accredited agents, acting most scrupulously in accordance with the law, had been sued for so doing, a Chief Baron who was universally respected<sup>4</sup> had not dismissed the suit with costs to the defendants but had recommended a compromise. If this was to be regarded as a precedent, if any resolute offender could cause them two years' embarrassment, and, despite conviction on every possible count,

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 74, f. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 136, 159-60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 195-6, 213; *Ibid.*, 75, f. 16; *C.L.M.*, f. 5; *City Cash Books*, 1/13, ff. 134, 212v and *passim* June to September 1670; 1/14, f. 57, and annually thereafter under Leadenhall Street in the list of city tenants.

It should be remembered that approximately £70 was in any case due to Selby for ground taken into the street. The exact size of the plot cannot be given. It had four houses on it and, if Mills's plan is drawn to scale, it was a rectangle approximately 69 feet by 50, exclusive of vaults and gardens.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Matthew Hale.

then escape scot-free, rigid administration of the Acts would have to be regarded as impossible. Even compromise would degenerate into hard bargaining, and the City's troubles would be endless. Fortunately Selby, though not unique, was exceptional. The City was constantly hampered by difficulties in enforcing its decisions, but not to the point of giving up the attempt. Most offenders ultimately yielded and, if administering some parts of the Acts was a heavy burden for ten years, and a trouble for ten more, it was a burden which was never jettisoned. It became a recognized part of the City's work, accepted as inevitable, but unpopular enough to provide a respectable annual revenue from the fines of those who preferred to avoid it. In the words of Sir Dennis Gawden, the sheriff, 'as the City is now, there is no great honour nor joy to be had in being a public officer'.<sup>1</sup>

The methods devised for the actual work of administering the Acts are an example, remarkable even in that period, of the amount of work which could be laid upon a voluntary, unpaid magistracy. Even at the height of conciliar government the Stuart Justice was never asked to perform as much as was called for from the city's representatives after the Fire. That crisis produced nothing original in the matter of administration. Adaptation was the keynote of all the systems used. The executive remained the same, the methods were unchanged, and only an extension of scope differentiated post- from pre-Fire conditions. Even a brief working examination of the systems and methods will serve to make this clear.

That for disputes arising out of the rebuilding of the houses has already been outlined. It was not allowed to rust. When most were building higher, many farther back, and nearly all at different times, it needs no effort to imagine how often lights were obstructed, entries stopped and watercourses blocked. For the year from Michaelmas 1668, when private rebuilding was proceeding in earnest, but before the second Act had added to the Aldermen's jurisdiction, the Repertory has more

<sup>1</sup> Pepys's *Diary*, September 11th, 1667.

than a hundred entries relating to disputes about buildings and street lines. If it is remembered that recourse to the Court was available only after the ward authorities had failed to produce a solution, the figures are startling.<sup>1</sup> The Aldermen dealt with them as best they could. They viewed and mediated, and they called on the surveyors to give opinions and to suggest modifications.<sup>2</sup> If adjustment proved impossible, compensation was proposed. If the parties proved obdurate, a decision was given, and both sides bound to observe it. Generally moderation triumphed, though the struggle was often long drawn out.

Decisions about improvements have also been touched upon. Apart from the street schemes, once they had been planned their execution was mainly a matter of the ordinary City routine.<sup>3</sup> Each was placed under a committee drawn from both courts with powers to make the necessary contracts and to buy land if needed. These committees were responsible for the work and passed the contractors'<sup>4</sup> accounts. The latter might require the sanction of the Court of Aldermen before the Chamberlain could pay them, but this was not an invariable rule. In general, so far as building improvements were concerned, it was the amount to be done rather than innovations of method which marked the time as exceptional. The only changes of note were the employment of many different contractors, the substitution of the surveyors for the City

<sup>1</sup> So startling that for a time I assumed that the ward authorities must have been passed over. However, if one assumes that no more than two-thirds of the four thousand foundations staked out before the end of the summer of 1669 were being built upon, the figure becomes understandable. The Repertory is 74.

<sup>2</sup> Some of their reports are to be found in the *Viewers' Books*, vols. I and II, others in the Repertories. The Surveyors did not oust the City Viewers but, in the area of the rebuilding, they did in fact perform some of their functions. In July 1668, Mr. Rawlins, the eldest clerk in the Utter (Mayor's) Court, was ordered to attend them in their views upon disputes and to draw up and enter the same 'as hee useth to doe of the views of the common viewers of this Citty': (*Repert.*, 74, f. 225).

<sup>3</sup> The Fleet Scheme was an exception and, though committees were usually drawn from both courts, this was not invariable.

<sup>4</sup> The word is used advisedly. Knoop and Jones, *op. cit.*, have shown that the masons were genuine contractors, and the same is true of other prominent people working on the rebuilding.

workmen<sup>1</sup> as the principal technical advisers, and of the coal dues for the City cash as the source of most payments.

The regulations governing the construction of private houses were a more formidable problem. There was nothing to admire in the records of the enforcement of the long series proclaimed in former years by the Crown. The Common Viewers were incapable of doing better, and the overworked representatives of the wards could not possibly be asked to add such a whole-time task to their other duties. Parliament therefore adopted the City's proposal and provided for the appointment of surveyors sworn to enforce them. These men were in the best possible position to see and hear whether the regulations were being observed. Continually moving round the city and known to all of importance in the building trades, information could reach them in all manner of ways. Probably instructions from them sufficed to deal with minor offences and minor offenders, but for major offences the City had to be called in. Their work as discoverers of infringements<sup>2</sup> was, however, only a small part of the sum of their duties. They could not be expected to note every fault, and many might have escaped had they not had powerful allies in the neighbours of those who were building irregularly. For all sorts of reasons, from dread of fire to unneighbourly spite, such people reported infringements to the court of Aldermen.<sup>3</sup> The man who caused his upper walls to be built thinner than the Act required or substituted timber for brick, had always to fear that information would be laid against him, whilst, if he built beyond the frontage line, the whole street might unite to oppose him.

<sup>1</sup> There were eight City workmen at this time, one from each of the main sections of the building trade. They received a livery, or money in lieu thereof, and a retaining fee of £2 each per annum. All were substantial people, and, in normal times, they did the work for and gave advice on matters coming within their trade. After the Fire others had to be called in but, in February 1673, the City agreed that they should be given preference over other workmen provided that their demands and prices were equally reasonable: (*Repert.*, 78, f. 86v).

<sup>2</sup> Examples of the notes they made appear in MS. 84 – see for instances, Mills, I, ff. 62, 109, II, f. 53, and Oliver, I, f. 80.

<sup>3</sup> Usually in the form of a petition for redress.

Reports, whether from the surveyors or from others, brought the full machinery of the City into action, and if the offender failed to amend his work he did so at his peril. Before long the City was calling on the surveyors to furnish regular weekly returns of the defective or irregular buildings in their respective divisions<sup>1</sup> and laying down that, where the owners did not appear to answer charges, the surveyors were to see to the necessary alterations.<sup>2</sup> Convicted offenders were bound by recognizances to amend, generally receiving two months in which to do so. If they failed they were liable to prosecution. Supplemented by the discoveries contained in private informations, these were the broad lines of the system as it evolved. Within those lines, it shifted and swung to meet the views of the Aldermen and the needs of the moment, but such changes in detail did not affect the general principles.<sup>3</sup>

In the main the system seems to have worked well, and to have ensured that the regulations were observed. The Lord Mayor and the Justices held periodical sessions to deal with offenders, and instructions were given from time to time for the prosecution of the recalcitrant.<sup>4</sup> Some, it is true, must have evaded surveyors and neighbours alike, and the work was never finished. Even far on, when the tide of buildings had covered all save scattered islets, half-forgotten sites, barely revealed as gaps in the regular lines of the street-frontages, it was still proceeding. In the summer of 1676 the surveyors were ordered to make a full survey in order to discover irregular

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 73, ff. 107v, 223. They had to give the name of the witnesses in each case. The Act provided for conviction, by the oaths of two or more credible witnesses, before the Lord Mayor or any two or more of the city Justices. It also authorized the Court of Aldermen to have the alterations carried out.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 69.

<sup>3</sup> This section has dealt only with breaches of the regulations accepted or instigated by the person for whom the rebuilding was being done. Where the actual workman or contractor fraudulently built in contravention of them, he could be prosecuted for breach of contract, and complaint could be made to the Company of his trade. Two examples of complaints against carpenters are cited by Jupp and Pocock, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

<sup>4</sup> See for examples *Repert.*, 76, f. 211v and 77, f. 127v. Prosecution 'to the utmost' was to be conducted in the Utter (Mayor's) Court by its eldest attorney and the serjeant at mace.

buildings,<sup>1</sup> and the Common Serjeant instructed to advise on the best course for prosecuting those responsible.<sup>2</sup> In October of that year a man was convicted for making a party wall of timber, and duly bound to amend it.<sup>3</sup> Five years later the Aldermen were still pursuing irregularities, but by that time it had ceased to be solely a matter of the rebuilding.<sup>4</sup> The regulations were of general application throughout the city and, since they dealt with the old, ineradicable nuisances, were bound to be cited year in and year out. By 1685 the ward inquests were again presenting faulty gutters and insufficient fall-pipes, as they were to continue to do for many years to come. Whilst lead remained expensive and cast-iron a substitute of the future, builders were sure to economize and the public to suffer.<sup>5</sup> The regulations could no more secure compliance by all than can regulations to-day. The exceptions were there: the important thing was that their number had become so small.

The basis of the whole system remains to be dealt with. The first Act had provided that no man could build until a surveyor had viewed his ground and seen that the party walls and piers were equally set out. The City therefore arranged 'for the prevention of any exaction in the taking of such Surveys & of all quarrels & contentions which may arise between the builders' that no man should even lay his foundation until this had been done, and that the fee for it should be a flat 6s. 8d.,<sup>7</sup> to apply irrespective of size and location. Each

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 81, f. 199v.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 231.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 332.

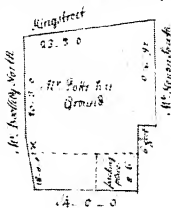
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 86, ff. 227v, 232v, and 87, f. 49. The irregularities mentioned in the first of these instances can hardly have existed since the rebuilding. On being brought to the notice of the City, the householders were ordered to make the necessary reforms. They failed to do so, and the City workmen were therefore ordered to carry them out.

<sup>5</sup> The careful builder stipulated in his contract that the pipes, from the penthouse to the street, should be protected by 'cases of Boards . . . to secure the lead from being cut off and stolen'.

<sup>6</sup> Act of Common Council, April 29th, 1667.

<sup>7</sup> This was expressly stated to be for defraying the cost of measuring, staking and surveying the streets, as well as of setting out the foundations. Hence even those who had already laid their foundations were required to pay it. The second Act gave parliamentary sanction and reinforcement to the system, and made a default on the fee the subject of an action for debt.

Spoke out one found in Kingsstreet for Mr. Don's sake con-  
 in front 20 foot 3 inch and in depth on the North side 28 foot and  
 3 inches including a piece of ground like a parking place 5 foot 6  
 inches East and West and 14 foot North and South the breadth of  
 all the ground to a break East where a piece of timber  
 lay for a garden and fence in length on the South side East and  
 West 26 foot 3 inches this piece of ground being intermixt with  
 the ground of Mr. Don's house. It was affirmed to me that a division  
 was made by consent and so stated out by the persons he names.



P. Mills

Witness as follows

Mr. Hurrell

Mr. Sir Taylor

Mr. Hartley

Mr. Don's house Bricklayer

Mr. Proctor

The Agreement of Mr. Lane and Mr. Bartlett Arbitrator and Mr. Mills June 8 1681

The Entry out of Mr. Lawrence Lane to Mr. Don's house 6 foot 2  
 inches clear the length of the Entry to be 27 foot 6 inches the breadth  
 North and South of the Yard and parking place from the middle of  
 the North wall is 14. 0. 0 and the length East and West of the same  
 26 foot and 3 inches which is to be kept all above the first Entry  
 for an Entry for Mr. Hayde to have right into when his  
 occasion requires and on the South side of his parking place  
 and Yard Mr. Hayde is to run Eastward into Mr. Don's house  
 5 foot 9 inch and North and South of the same breadth for  
 the ground South and Mr. Hayde better run 4 foot Eastward  
 Eastward.

'Setting out foundations' — the necessary preliminary to rebuilding. A  
 surveyor's plan with, below it, the record of an agreement, umpired by  
 Peter Mills, adjusting an intermixture of interests in parts of the ground

From MS. 84 in the Guildhall Library, London



## ADMINISTERING THE REBUILDING ACTS

builder, when he was ready to begin, was ordered to go to the Chamber and there enter his name and the place of his site. This done, he paid the fee and was given a receipt. The latter he took to the surveyor for his district, who accepted it as evidence that the regulations had been complied with, and arranged a time for the site to be set out. Failing a receipt he would not act.

The method was simple and convenient. It freed the City from hopeless attempts to lay the responsibility on any particular interest or to ensure that all paid by a fixed date.<sup>1</sup> Yet it ensured that the bulk of the sites were paid for, and made it possible to discover in a moment whether any particular person had or had not done so. The issue of receipts protected the surveyors, and they in turn had only to consult their books to know whether a foundation on which building was proceeding had been legally set out. Simple and fool-proof, it was retained unchanged throughout the rebuilding. Although at the start there was a rush of work which accumulated, causing long delays between the payment for and the setting out of the foundations, once this had been disposed of all ran smoothly.<sup>2</sup> Some may have grumbled at the fee, but it could hardly have been less and it is plain from the surveyor's books that again and again they settled without further ado disputes which

<sup>1</sup> Compare this with the difficulties of earlier projects for a survey.

<sup>2</sup> The first payment was entered on May 13th, 1667. By the end of the month 158 foundations had been paid for, and June added a further 131. If both surveyors had been able to devote their whole time to setting out, they might have been able to keep on terms with the work, but they were constantly needed to advise and report on other matters, and arrears soon accumulated. Under the most favourable circumstances Mills and his man succeeded in setting out 12 foundations in one day (May 25th, 1667), but most of these were grouped close together, and four men owned ten of them. Without such reductions in the distance to be covered and in the possibilities of contention, an average of six for each day spent in such work was as much as could be hoped for. Although the first receipts were inflated by payments for foundations which had actually been set out in the week before the regulations had been reduced to their final state, they were still too numerous, and, when at the end of June Mills fell seriously ill, disaster threatened the system. Fortunately Oliver was true to his promise. His help relieved the position, although, even so, Mr. William Bell, who had paid his money on June 7th, did not get his survey until August 6th. Later there were no difficulties and the second Act was able to stipulate that the survey should be made within three days of payment.

would otherwise have developed into serious troubles. To read those books is to realize the value and the wisdom of the system.

The procedure seldom varied. The surveyor and his man arrived, to find the owner or tenant waiting, the site cleared of rubbish, and everything ready for the measurement. If the case was straightforward, the dimensions were taken, the walls and piers set out, and rebuilding could then begin. If a matter was in doubt or a dispute brewing, those interested in the adjoining sites would also be there, each party supported by a little group of neighbours ready to give evidence in his support. The pity is that no artist has left a picture of the scene. The blank of the burnt area stretching out on all sides. Pitiful ruined churches rising roofless and windowless, the mourning of their blackened walls contrasting with the signs of returning life. The lines of stakes, the scattered groups of workmen busy on the outlines of fresh houses, and, in the foreground, a cluster of people in animated discussion round the surveyor. If Hollar could have drawn the city and Hogarth the people, the impression would have been imperishable. But Hollar was busy on his map, Hogarth unborn, and the citizens themselves unimpressed by a sight blurred by familiarity. The surveyors dealt daily with such cases, listened to the allegations, heard the evidence on each side, and pronounced their solutions. For them the only interest must have been the reception given to their proposals. Normally they were accepted: occasionally all conciliation failed, and the matter had to be left to others. The ownership of a wall, or the exact line of a boundary — the commonest matters of contention — could usually be disposed of. They were questions of fact and no amount of appealing was likely to alter the conclusions first established. When Oliver entered in his book 'I sett out one found[ation] for Mr. Robert Barrow in littell Distaffe Lane 28 of July 1669 . . . The North wall aleadged by Mr. Nick Whitte [a neighbour] and Mr. Benitt and Mr. Jn<sup>o</sup> Nobes'<sup>1</sup> the opposition knew that they

<sup>1</sup> MS. cit., 1, f. 174.

could only take the matter further with profit if they could produce fresh evidence. Otherwise the same three would swear to the same statements, and the same decision would be given. The apportioning of intermixed interests, however, was much more difficult. The line of the old foundation might throw no light on them, and the views of the neighbours could easily be prejudiced or unreliable. Values had to be apportioned and, if the extent of the intermixture was in dispute, obstinacy could destroy all hope of agreement and make all discussion vain. With good will on each side, the most complicated cases could be unravelled, and passages, side-entries, lights and the relative value of say forty-eight square feet of floor space in the attic as against sixty-eight on the first floor all adjusted harmoniously.<sup>1</sup> But, without good will, an agreed award was beyond hope. Before the second Act extended the special jurisdiction of the court of Aldermen to cover disputes of this class, there was no remedy save recourse to the law. After the second Act the surveyors could at least make their notes with care so that the Aldermen would be able to give a just decree.

This system, the foundation of all the methods devised for preventing disputes and discovering irregular houses, was also the basis of the method used to pay for 'staked' land. Under the Acts, all property required for public purposes had to be bought by the City and paid for out of the coal dues. The task of negotiating with the various interests concerned, of reaching agreement over the price to be paid, and of verifying and obtaining due transfer of the title all fell upon it. Accurate measurement of the land in question was a first essential. Accordingly, either at the time of setting out the foundation, or later, the surveyors were required to give to the person concerned a certificate stating the dimensions and surface area of the amount staked off. Armed with this, the recipient was able to approach the City and the bargaining could begin. Special cases occasioned more trouble, but the basis of the negotiations

<sup>1</sup> See, for a good example, MS. cit., Oliver, 1, f. 37.

was normally a surveyor's certificate of the type described.<sup>1</sup>

These negotiations formed the last chapter in the work of administration laid on the City by the Acts. They proved a formidable task. Of necessity, the number of owners was very high in proportion to the actual acreage to be bought, and, with values ranging from garden ground in the despised Fleet valley to frontages in the magnificence of Cheapside, it was difficult to work out any single unit of assessment. The new lines of the streets cut into hundreds of properties, taking anything from an insignificant strip of a few inches wide to the whole site of a former building. The 'middle rows' in Newgate and Old Fish Streets had to be bought in their entirety, whilst the new markets, the Fleet Canal and the Thames Quay often required complete holdings — sites, gardens, wharves and all. In addition the widening of old and the creation of new streets not infrequently left fractions of ground, too small for any building, yet in positions of high frontage-value. Besides complications of these kinds, the City had to make sure that it was dealing with the rightful owners. Titles had to be verified before delivery could be taken, and frauds detected. The spectres of complex interests and burnt title deeds, which could regard the Fire Court as their rightful home, were not unknown in the Guildhall. Ordinary caution provided a rule that, after the amount of compensation had been agreed, it should remain in the Chamber for six months, in case further claimants should appear, whilst, at the end of that time, it was only released against an undertaking firstly to indemnify the City against all future claims, and secondly to pay to anyone who might make

<sup>1</sup> It is much to be regretted that none of the surveyors' books have survived. The volumes called MS. 84 are copies, and apparently faithful copies, but they do not appear to preserve the form of the original and they do not make clear how the original books were arranged. Even so they form an extremely interesting running commentary on the rebuilding, as seen by a surveyor with his many responsibilities. Amongst the City Lands Committee's papers in the Guildhall Records Office are numerous reports and certificates by these men. They supplement MS. 84 and have an extra interest in that they carry notes and marginalia made by the clerk to the committee. They have made it possible to reconstruct most of the details of the systems used for setting out, staking, and negotiating for compensation. Hooke's certificates, absent from MS. 84, are present in abundance amongst the Committee's papers.

good a claim such sums as the City should consider reasonable compensation therefor.

The work was entrusted to the City Lands Committee.<sup>1</sup> This body normally dealt with the letting of the City's properties (including at this time those of London Bridge) and, by special reference, with most of the problems arising out of their ownership and management. After the Fire it was responsible for negotiating rebuilding terms with the tenants, and, in addition, it gradually took over more and more of the programme for public rebuilding, being made responsible in January 1672 for the whole of it.<sup>2</sup> It was therefore admirably qualified for its new task, whilst, from the point of view of those with whom it was to have dealings, it had the advantage of a familiar procedure, and a well-known personnel. The surveyor's certificate, the basis of its system, has already been discussed. This certificate was taken by the recipient to the Committee, with a request for satisfaction. The clerk entered the claimant's name on a roster, and in due course, his case came up.<sup>3</sup> When compensation had been agreed a warrant was signed instructing the Chamberlain to pay the sum due at the end of six months 'unless any other person shall before that time lay a just and lawful claim to the same'. On the due date

<sup>1</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 209.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 142, 148, 172, 219; *Book of Grants of the City Lands Committee*, v, f. 97. The Committee was elected annually from both courts. Ordinarily half of the members were replaced at each election, and no member served for more than two years, but this fell into abeyance after the Fire and was not restored until 1674: (*Jor.*, 47, f. 254). In the early seventeenth century it was empowered to let the lands and tenements belonging to the City, at its discretion, for periods up to 21 years or, if the tenants undertook to rebuild, up to 10 years longer, and to renew old leases, if within three years of expiry. In the last case, it was stipulated that the former rent should not be reduced. During the attempt at financial reform which followed the realization in the 1640s of the City's plight, the rules had been relaxed and leases up to 99 years had been authorized: (*Ibid.*, 41, f. 50). Many of 61 years had been granted and, at the time of the Fire, numbers of the tenants had terms of over 40 years still to run. These were usually made up to a total of 81 years in return for an undertaking by the tenant to rebuild the premises.

<sup>3</sup> It was not necessary to have the certificate when entering a claim, though it was an essential at the hearing. The roster was not strictly adhered to. An urgent need, such as the acquisition of all the holdings required for a new market, might upset it for several consecutive sittings.

the City received a conveyance of the land, together with an indemnification against any future claimants to it, and the holder of the warrant was then free to draw his money. Richard Uttber will serve as an illustration of a straightforward case. He had lost  $37\frac{1}{2}$  square feet from his site in Old Jewry. For this he obtained Oliver's certificate and, being a careful man, noted on it that, on August 18th, 1668, he had duly made his claim at the town clerk's office. Whether he had difficulties with others interested, or whether, as is more probable, by reason of the length of the waiting list, compensation was not agreed until May 11th, 1670. On that day he received his warrant and, six months later to the day, he drew his money.<sup>1</sup>

Numerically, the majority of the transactions were of this type — straightforward cases of sites with a few square feet cut off to widen a street. Provided that the plot had sufficient depth, nobody suffered. The house was moved a corresponding distance backwards, compensation was paid, a conveyance executed and the owner and tenant arranged between themselves how the money should be divided. But a minority of cases occasioned much more trouble. Some owners refused to accept the terms offered, others were legally barred from treating. Those living outside London were often difficult to get at, and in some cases their very existence was unknown. Compensation for whole sites, for rooms built over alleys, for the extinguishing of valuable easements, or for damage caused by changes in levels, had to be specially assessed in each case. As time went on it frequently became impossible even to see the land which was being bought. In the Fleet valley, where the ground levels were much altered, many of the foundations were buried under tons of the rubble from St. Paul's. Oliver had to certify that he could not give the dimensions of one site there 'by reason the streete is raised there about six foote above the ould pavement', and Hooke that another 'lying very deep buried in Rubbish, I can not come to take Dimensions thereof'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C.L.P., 1668; *Coal Duty Account Books*, I, under November 11th, 1670.

<sup>2</sup> C.L.P., 1670 and 1671.



These are to certify that I have no measure of  
ground taken off from a certain plot of ground  
belonging to the Company of Skinners as I am  
informed lying at the North east corner of Road  
Lane. And I do find that there is taken away  
from the said ground for the enlargement of  
said Lane, seven foot <sup>in depth</sup> at the north end next  
Church Street and at sixty foot southwards  
in the said Lane nothing the superficial  
content of which is two hundred & ten foot square  
more when I have hereto set my hand this 27<sup>th</sup> of  
May 1671

Robt Hooke

I have hereto also annexed a certificate of Mr Ligg -  
who lieth in the house and of Mr Jones the brick layer that  
built it - of the Dimensions of the ground taken  
off from an other plot of ground belonging to the  
Company. Lying at the South West corner of St Nicholas  
Lane the superficial content of which call up amounts  
to Ninety and three foot.

Robt Hooke

Robert Hooke's certificates of land taken from the Skinners' Company for widening streets. The lower was accompanied by evidence of dimensions, subsequent changes having made measurement impossible

From the Corporation of London's records

In the rest of the city the usual reason was that the paving of the streets had covered over the ground taken for widening, and the certificates came in with attestations from neighbours that the site had formerly extended into the street and that it was estimated that the area lost had amounted to some specified number of square feet. All too often the parties interested in the ground were at variance, and a settlement might have to be delayed until they had agreed on the apportionment of the compensation money. Watch had also to be kept that the same site was not paid for twice over, and that conveyances were received from all those who had any kind of title which it was necessary to extinguish.<sup>1</sup> Finally there was the difficulty of assessing 'melioration' moneys<sup>2</sup> — owners meeting the City's contention that the sites had been improved in, for instance, the new Newgate Market with strong assertions to the contrary.

The diary of the clerk to the City Lands Committee would be an invaluable commentary on the whole proceedings, but, looking over his shoulder as he jots down his notes one can obtain a very fair substitute.<sup>3</sup> Negotiations about Sabbs Dock are to be continued when the landlords return to London 'which it is supposed will be speedily'.<sup>4</sup> The laystall near

<sup>1</sup> S. 24 of the first Act laid down that payment of compensation, or its tender and refusal, was to divest the interested parties of their title, and that it was to be vested in the City in like manner as the other common streets and highways. Judging from the number of conveyances which have survived, one can only assume that the City, where possible, preferred to rely on something more definite than the evidence of payments fortified by a general clause in a statute.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 165-7.

<sup>3</sup> The following account, like the whole of this description of the work of the City Lands Committee, is drawn from four main sources: the City Lands Committee Papers; the 'old Minutes' (July 1668 — January 1673), the Orders (1667-71), and the Grants (vols. iv and v) of the same committee; the Coal Duty Account Books; and the Journals and Repertories. Complete references have not been attempted. The first source is the most valuable, and it has no fixed arrangement, whilst the Minutes and Orders, though bound, are only sometimes folio'd. Jotting is a correct description. The clerk's notes were only intended as guides for subsequent fair copies, and their terseness and appalling illegibility compel frequent re-reading. As the harassed rector of St. Bride's declared to the City when excusing the incompleteness of his returns of payments made during the Plague, 'There are several names wanting which could not be made nothing of, but money there was paid.'

<sup>4</sup> *C.L.M.*, f. 87.



Queenhithe is to be considered when the King has decided about the Waterline. Preparation of the new market at Newgate is to be begun, the committee being of the opinion that Sir William Bolton has received as much as is due to him. If he troubles them further his interest can be assessed by a jury — they are confident that he will get no more by that method. £381 is to be paid to Henry Fewtrell and Grace Townsend for their interest in ground needed for Woolchurch Market 'being the reversion after the death of Margaret, wife of Charles Jarmyn, gent, in the ground of 4 late messuages'.<sup>1</sup> Nine years' purchase for a reversion seems a stiff price,<sup>2</sup> but the neighbourhood is good, and perhaps it is not unreasonable. Mrs. Dixon 'whom they were heretofore induced to promise £240 for her ground in Queen Street . . . upon . . . a precontract alleadged to be made by her with Mr. Cordwell for the same sume' is to be severely dealt with, the Committee having since had grounds to believe that the precontract 'was onely a wind-lace to them'<sup>3</sup> — a fraud designed to draw them up to their maximum. Five straightforward claims settled, and the roster to be noted accordingly. Ground for the Fleet Canal is to be bought on a valuation of fifteen years' purchase of one-third of the pre-Fire rack rent for the land and buildings.<sup>4</sup> Henry Smith has sent in a signed confession that the land he had represented as his own really belongs to his landlord, Richard Collin, of Braintree in Essex.<sup>5</sup> The Coal

<sup>1</sup> *Coal Duty Account Books*, 1, f. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *C.L.M.*, f. 72.

<sup>3</sup> *C.L.O.*, f. 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 51, 65. This took the place of the superficial measure normally used. Those who fronted on to the staked ground were to be liable for 'melioration' and were either to treat with the committee for their assessment, or to have it determined by a jury.

<sup>5</sup> The surveyors' certificates were frequently endorsed with notes that there was a landlord's interest to be taken into account, e.g. 'The inheritance believed to be in the Clothworkers', 'whereof Mr. Wheatley is reputed the owner'. They were intended for the guidance of the committee rather than as reflections on the honesty of the tenant. Actually the arrangements made between landlord and tenant about the receipt of compensation varied widely. The tenants of the Bridge received the whole where only a fraction of the site was taken, but the money was apportioned if the complete site was lost. They had no holdings which were affected by 'melioration', but the City ruled that where its tenants were so affected they should pay the meliora-

## ADMINISTERING THE REBUILDING ACTS

Books are to be searched to see whether Mr. Michelbourne has not already received compensation for his land in The Poultry.<sup>1</sup> When satisfaction comes to be agreed for a large block of Bridewell's property, staked off for the Fleet Canal, the existing tenants desire that they may be heard. Counsel's opinion is to be taken about payment to St. Margaret New Fish Street for the site of the Monument<sup>2</sup> . . . And so it goes on, the committee always striving to keep abreast of its work, claimants waiting impatiently for their turn. 'Sat: next to meet all day about settling grants and p[ro]ceedings' scribbled the clerk at the end of his day. 'S', ran a note which he folded into his book, 'You were pleased to promise mee that I should bee called the Last day the Committee sate. I only desire the favour that I may not bee putt by this time. I shall attend at the Doore.'

Parliament provided two valuable solvents for the worst difficulties when it laid down that the Fire Judges and special juries were to be used in certain contingencies. Residual slips, disputes between different interests over the apportioning of compensation money, and refusal or inability to agree about the amount to be paid for staked land, were all included under this heading. The first were treated by a combination of both solvents. Those fractions of holdings — 'divers Slips and small parcels of Ground remaining altogether useless to the Owners thereof in regard the same are not capable of any House being built thereupon' — would, if left, have destroyed the uniformity of the streets and have been of value to nobody. The Fire

<sup>1</sup> He had not.

<sup>2</sup> The opinion may be seen in *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 94.

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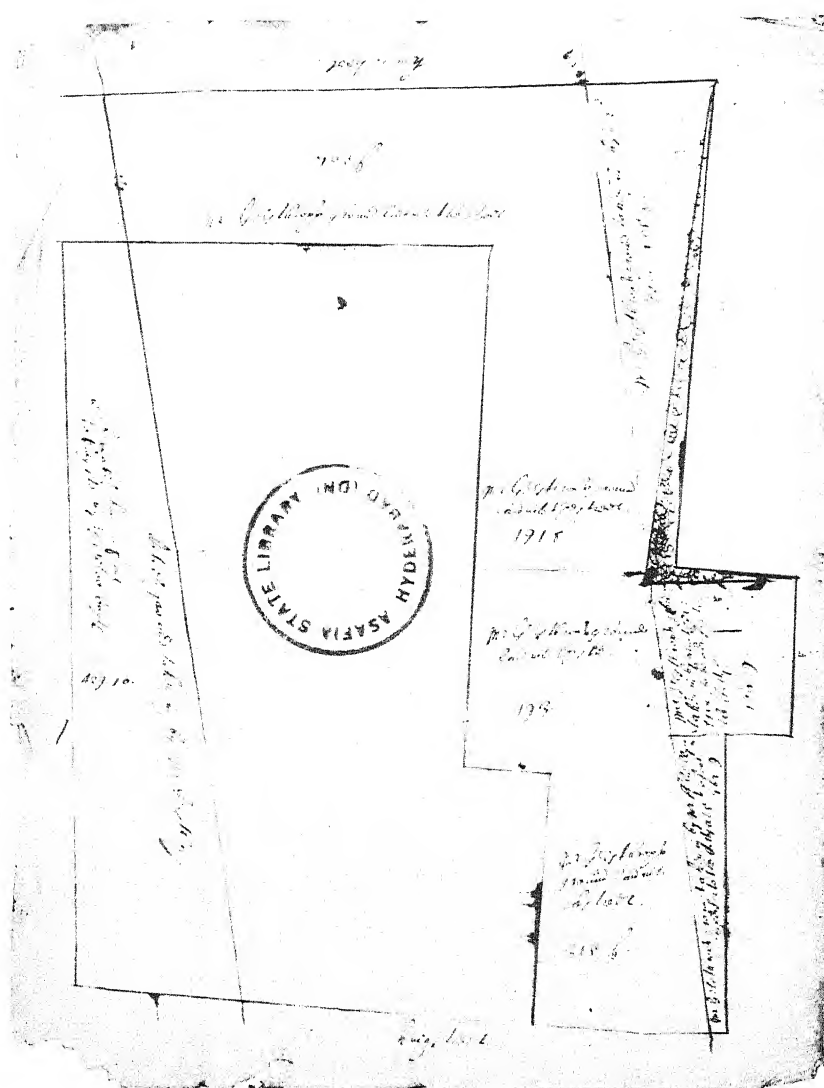
tion and receive the compensation. If there was no question of melioration, the amount was apportioned. In reply to an inquiry from the City, St. Thomas's Hospital wrote in 1677, 'You may assure the Committee that the Governors of St. Thomas Hospitall did order and agree so, with all their Tennants after the fire in London that the Tenants should have and take the satisfaction given for the ground taken from their Lands and laid into the streetes . . .' The Merchant Taylors, on the other hand, arranged with a number of their tenants that, when they came to rebuild, they should surrender their leases and take new ones. In these the ground plot was shown on a plan. Where this had been done, and the plan excluded the parts staked, two lawyers' opinions declared that the tenants were not entitled to any of the compensation, unless there was a specific agreement to that effect: (*C.L.P.*, 1675).

Court was therefore empowered either to transfer them to the plots behind or beside them, or else to add to them sufficient from those plots to allow a convenient house to be built. The value of the ground so used was to be assessed by a special jury, and the owners recompensed accordingly.<sup>1</sup> The second category of difficulties, that of disputes over the division of compensation moneys, was clearly juridical by nature, and to the City's relief, was handed over to the Fire Judges.<sup>2</sup> The third category demanded an impartial assessment of values, and, since the science of valuation as it is practised to-day had not yet been worked out, recourse to a jury of substantial and disinterested men was the only method available. The Acts therefore adopted it<sup>3</sup> as they had done for other and similar purposes. In this instance the value returned by the jury was to be binding on all parties, and tender of that amount by the City sufficient authority for it to proceed. Hence a deadlock could always be averted and, if either the Committee or a claimant felt that the compensation proposed was not reasonable, a remedy was immediately available. Even so there were difficulties. Great care was taken to see that disinterested men were chosen, and to avoid collusion the Act stipulated that no two should be taken from the same ward. Yet a verdict giving John Amhurst, Esquire, £546 and exemption from melioration for ground laid into Newgate Market so provoked the Aldermen that they took the extreme step of refusing to accept it, entering their reasons for this course with unusual vigour and clarity. 'Inasmuch', they declared, 'as this Court was now satisfied that the [claimant] hath severall times had private communication with the said Jurors or some of them and

<sup>1</sup> Act of 1670, s. 32. This method was used on a number of occasions. For examples see Fire Decrees H, ff. 184 *et seq.*, and *Repert.*, 77, f. 181; H, ff. 197 *et seq.*, and *Repert.*, 77, f. 171; H, f. 245 *et seq.*, and *Repert.*, 77, f. 192. As the two sets of documents are best consulted together, I have given only the references to the set of decrees at the Guildhall.

<sup>2</sup> First Act, s. 25, and second Act, s. 3. The wording should be compared as the two are not identical.

<sup>3</sup> First Act, s. 23, and second Act, s. 3. It had been adopted for the same reason in 14 Charles II, c. 2.



A PLAN OF GROUND ACQUIRED FOR MAKING KING STREET  
 Narrow residual slips, too small for house-sites, may be seen on each  
 side of the street.

## ADMINISTERING THE REBUILDING ACTS

wrought upon them by Misinformaçon treats [*sic*] and other indirect meanes to give in recompence . . . the said excessive sume . . . whereas in truth (as this Court was now certainly informed and abundantly satisfied) the said [claimant] hath received little if any damage by taking away the s<sup>d</sup> ground there being soe great an Improvement of his remayning ground and buildings there by the Laying of that into the . . . Markett place that the . . . remayning ground or buildings are in rents and value greater then the whole . . . were or could yeild before the late dismall fire, It was thought reasonable and soe ordered that the said verdict bee sett aside.' Another jury 'of good and indifferent men' was to be impanelled to assess the recompence 'if they see cause of any'.<sup>1</sup> Evidently the method was not immune from danger. Nevertheless it was the best available, and it was freely resorted to by both sides. If it could on occasion be abused, it had the solution of many deadlocks to its credit.<sup>2</sup>

The committee had one thing more to negotiate in connection with the sums payable for staked land. The framers of the Acts took the view that since some owners must benefit from the improvements which were to be carried out, it was only just that they should contribute in proportion to their gain.<sup>3</sup> The principle was as attractive and as incontestable as the taxation of increased land values, but in the last resort it was almost as difficult to apply. Built on ground most of which

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 76, f. 257v. The correctness of the Court's view is supported by a note, made by Oliver some months earlier and in another connection, that staking in that region had much meliorated the claimant's ground. Amhurst, however, stuck to his guns and sued the City, with the result that it finally agreed to give him £500. His contention later proved to have been justified. The rents in the neighbourhood, contrary to the City's anticipations, did not rise, and a committee ultimately reported that compensation ought to be paid for all land taken here. I should dearly like to know whether it was by 'treats' or by 'threats' that Amhurst won over the jurors.

<sup>2</sup> For examples see *Repert.*, 75, f. 242v; f. 316 (two interests in a toft, one being a life interest); *Repert.*, 76, f. 86v, f. 87, f. 88, f. 134v (4 examples); *Repert.*, 77, f. 243; *Repert.*, 78, f. 22v, f. 105, f. 124v (3 examples); *Repert.*, 80, f. 340 (a property in tail); *Repert.*, 82, f. 76; *Repert.*, 87, f. 12v; *Repert.*, 88, f. 163.

<sup>3</sup> The idea was not evolved for the occasion. It had been included in 14 Charles II, c. 2, and the wording of the relevant section (24) in the Rebuilding Act is, *mutatis mutandis*, identical with that of the earlier act (29). Both provided for assessment by a jury if those interested refused, or were unable to compound.

had been garden before the Fire, Newgate Market should have been a perfect example, yet it miserably failed to answer the City's expectations. Rentable values did not rise substantially and, in the end, compensation had to be paid. Princes Street was much the same. In one of the best parts of the city, and yet close to the open walks of Moorfields, it should have provided valuable frontages, but the jury which valued them declared that 'upon the whole the . . . ground is not improved by the opening of the . . . streete'.<sup>1</sup> The idea, however, was not wholly unfruitful and the City did not give up the attempt to enforce it. The surveyors were instructed to keep records of sites which, by widenings, had been brought forward on to the streets,<sup>2</sup> and undertakings were obtained from those to whom compensation was paid that any sum awarded for melioration should be paid back. The juries always took improvement into account, and it appears in their awards in various forms as deduction from the compensation given. An exact figure is not given, but the formula runs 'respecting the Melioraçon and Improvement of the remaining ground and buildings doe asseesse damages at . . .', or, more simply, the award is made, 'free of melioraçon'. In actual practice, there were not a great many instances in which it could be claimed. Ordinary street widenings did not produce an assessable improvement, and it was only where a back house had been brought forward on to the street, or new frontages had been made, that the principle could be applied. In such cases the committee definitely conducted its negotiations on the basis that money was due to the City as well as to the owner of the ground taken away. In Amhurst's case, they went so far as to assert that the two balanced, and Pepys quotes a story of a similar instance in King Street,<sup>3</sup> though with the distinction

<sup>1</sup> February 6th, 1677 - *Repert.*, 82, f. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *C.L.M.*, f. 75.

<sup>3</sup> *Diary*, December 3rd, 1667. The date is important. Optimism about the future of rents in the city was then still common and Pepys's informant, Sir Richard Ford, followed up his story about King Street by declaring that other, unspecified places had benefited from improvements to such an extent that values of fourpence a foot had risen to fifteen shillings. Though the second figure included buildings, it still showed a multiplier of about fifteen.

that this time the suggestion came from the owner. The figures for both these places show that appreciable sums were deducted on account of melioration, though the amounts were never specified.<sup>1</sup> Whether much was received from other parts of the city can only be conjectured. Honey Lane Market and the Fleet ditch frontages were the most probable sources. In each case the figures suggest that something was received, but in each case it looks as though the amounts were small. The rest of the city may have produced an occasional instance, but the number was certainly not great. The system of setting off the amount levied, against the compensation due, prevented, and prevents, any statement being made out, but it is clear that the principle was maintained. This is the important factor and it is established beyond doubt. Although the aggregate receipts were not large the profit from improvements made out of public funds was definitely not allowed to accrue to a handful of fortunately placed individuals. Those who reaped an undue benefit were compelled to make restoration, and the public secured the advantages for which it had paid.

## § 11

As an appendix to this chapter on the City's work in administering the Rebuilding Acts, it seems fitting to include an illustration of the variety and the amount of the work done by the Aldermen when the measures were being evolved and first put into effect. The record which follows gives in chronological order the committees to which Sir William Hooker was appointed during the mayoral year 1666-67. Since only the regular bodies were chosen by annual election, at the beginning

<sup>1</sup> The only case to which a figure can be assigned is that of Thomas Morris, Esq. He had an interest in 1600 square feet of the ground staked off for Newgate Market. This he valued, with the concurrence of the committee, at £400. He asked to be paid at once, and the court of Aldermen agreed, subject to the deduction of £100 for the melioration of the remainder of his land fronting on to the market: (*Repert.*, 75, f. 195v, May 17th, 1670).

## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

he was on others, but neither they nor the wearisome, time-wasting deputations have been included.<sup>1</sup> Part of the work is peculiar to the rebuilding, part is the ordinary routine of City business. It should be remembered that the relief measures necessary immediately after the Fire had been settled before the year began and that routine work on rebuilding, which has just been outlined, had barely begun. Taking Aldermen's committees first he served on those considering:

The gift by Ireland of cattle for relief of the sufferers in the Fire.

The accounts of the distribution of the stock of coals sold each winter at summer rates to the poor.

The provision of a turnpike to accommodate the refugees dwelling in Lower Moorfields.

A complaint by the journeymen feltmakers against the actions of the officers of that Company.

The petition of the Beadles of the burnt wards for relief.

The dispute between the weighers of the King's and the Iron Beams.

The repair of the aqueducts, and the renewal of the supply of water to Newgate.

A petition from Emmanuel Hospital.

The carrying out of the act of Common Council about the measurement of coals.

In whom lay the right of appointing a clerk to the Fellowship of Street Porters.

To confer with the royal commissioners for delimiting the legal quays, wharves and stairs in the port of London.

A complaint of infringement of a trader's sign.

Examination of the City solicitor's account.

To consider possible sources of fuel for the city, and wharves and storage places for it.

Materials for the proposed fort at Sheerness.

<sup>1</sup> The work of mediating in, and resolving, disputes between builders cannot be shown. As alderman of an important ward, he would have had his fill of it. He was alderman of Walbrook until 1668, and thereafter of Cornhill.



## ADMINISTERING THE REBUILDING ACTS

To petition the King that the surplus under the Act 14 Charles II, c. 2 might be allotted to the city for enlarging the streets mentioned in that Act.

A dispute over an orphan's estate.

A petition about the setting out of Somers Quay.

In addition there were the following committees of the Common Council:

Means to raise the balance of the money due for building the warship 'Loyal London'.

A second committee on the above.

The City Lands Committee.

The committee for managing the lands acquired by the Royal Contract.

The committee considering the enlargement of streets.

To devise means for the more speedy repayment of the outstanding balance of the loan made by the citizens on the Hearth tax.

A further committee on street enlargement, with the general task of representing the City on that matter.

The completion of street enlargement and the carrying out of the provisions of the first Act relating thereto.

The King's recommendation that Sir William Bolton should be chosen surveyor general of the rebuilding of the city.

The demand by a former clerk of the City's works for the repayment of monies he alleged that he had spent on the City's account.

A third committee on the 'Loyal London'.

Sites for Markets.

Some of these committees were unlikely to take more than an hour or two, but the majority were on subjects which were important either in themselves or by reason of the interests involved. The examination of the solicitor's account was mere routine, and the question of the trader's sign a matter of fact, but the measurement of coals involved an old and bitter struggle, and the repayment of the Hearth loan a plunge into

## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

the general scramble round the Exchequer. All the items relating to the rebuilding were urgent, and most were important. In fact, when it is remembered that the court of Aldermen met at least twice a week during most of the year, that Common Council meetings had also to be attended, and that for one month Hooker was a commissioner of the Court of Requests, it is hard to see how, even with the help of the quorum system, he could have been able to preserve time for his own affairs.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In fairness it should be added that Hooker took a very full though not a unique share in the work. He had, for instance, 18 committees in common with his brother Alderman, Samuel Starling, and each had 12 in which the other had no share.

## FUNDS FOR PUBLIC REBUILDING

## § I—THE STATE OF THE CITY'S FINANCES

THE City's attitude to plans for improvements during the rebuilding was dominated by a reluctance to spend money which, at first sight, seems inexplicable. The smallest and most necessary expenditure was evaded where possible, and proposals for any kind of outlay were received with a nervousness which, in an elderly man, would have been described as querulous. The original survey, a gilt-edged investment or a courageous venture according to one's faith in its possibilities, could have been paid for out of hand for less than £2000, yet the City refused to venture. The charge for setting out foundations was instituted solely in order to provide for expenses of approximately £500 per annum. The examples are characteristic, suggesting a petty meanness wholly unworthy of a great city. The facts are indisputable, the suggestion false. Contrary to all outside appearances, the City was on the verge of bankruptcy.<sup>1</sup> Its liabilities were far in excess of its immediate assets, and its expenditure was constantly in excess of its income. Only by careful use of its excellent credit, and by combining economies with all possible expedients for improving revenue could it hope to escape catastrophe. The state of affairs was well-known to its rulers. They dare not speculate, for the only funds available belonged to others. They had to be cautious and they could not afford to be generous. Whether the reasons for the City's embarrassment were equally clear to them is doubtful. Looking back, they are obvious, but, at the time, the wrack of political and religious troubles hid them from all whose ideas or writings

<sup>1</sup> The City's finances from the Civil War to the funding of its debt by the Orphans' Act (5 & 6 William and Mary, c. 10) are a study in themselves. I hope to deal fully with them in a later book.

have survived. Briefly,<sup>1</sup> the City was suffering the consequences of its failure to come to terms with the growth of the London area. It was still seeking to exercise to the full privileges and functions which, because of that growth, were becoming either obsolete or more difficult, and, in either case, more costly to maintain. Living in the midst of an expanding area, it was fighting a losing battle against the granting of services absolutely necessary to that area, and at the same time carrying out, unpaid, duties which were to its benefit. It opposed, for example, but could not prevent, the gradual creation of markets in the suburbs,<sup>2</sup> whilst it received nothing from those suburbs<sup>3</sup> in return for its efforts to enforce standards and to prevent frauds in commodity dealings,<sup>4</sup> although the benefits of those efforts were necessarily felt outside as well as inside its own boundaries. Its privileges, in the case of markets, had become obsolete, and its functions with regard to commodities more difficult to exercise, but it was not prepared to give up either. To take another example, the conservancy of the Thames was still a function and a privilege of vital importance to London.<sup>5</sup> In any river, to regulate fishing,

<sup>1</sup> I have not attempted to deal here with the City's failure to adapt its system of regulation to the changes which were taking place in its commercial life. Weighing at the common beam was degenerating by the middle of the seventeenth century into an outgrown nuisance, and the same could be said of other once important safeguards. They should have been adapted, but the failure to do so was less important than the failure to deal constructively with the suburbs.

<sup>2</sup> The first charter of Edward III had ordained that no market would from thenceforth be granted within seven miles of the city. Charles I, in his first charter, had been induced to confirm this in still more comprehensive terms, but Covent Garden Market was in existence by 1656, and, though Charles II had confirmed the city's charters, the Earl of Bedford obtained a patent for it in 1671. In 1664 Charles had issued similar grants for markets in Bloomsbury and St. James's.

<sup>3</sup> The term is used here to include all the growing areas round the city.

<sup>4</sup> The City's repeated attempts to prevent the sharp practices of the woodmongers and others concerned in the provision and sale of coal are an excellent example.

<sup>5</sup> It had been obtained by the second charter of Richard I, and amplified in subsequent royal charters. The full extent of the City's jurisdiction covered more than sixty miles, from Colne Ditch, a little westward of Staines Bridge, to Yenleet in the estuary. Parts of the Lea and the Medway were also included. The Lord Mayor, as conservator, exercised his powers through water-bailiffs and courts of conservancy held in the four riparian counties of Middlesex, Essex, Surrey and Kent. Thomas Hale, *op. cit.*, in his extraordinarily wandering style, is at pains to demonstrate that, though the City was doing something, it was not doing nearly enough.

preserve the passage, and see that the banks are maintained is an arduous and expensive work, and the Thames, with trade, navigation and population all on the increase, was no exception. The growth of buildings along the banks made encroachments more frequent,<sup>1</sup> and the dumping of refuse and the erection of obstructions more common. Stairs and a causeway of the importance of that built by Sir Edward Hungerford to help his new market in the Strand<sup>2</sup> were rare, but lesser obstacles to navigation and to fishing were not. The City stuck to its task, although its auditing committee complained almost annually that the cost was too high.<sup>3</sup> As Thomas Hale declared, the Lord Admirals had long ceased to meddle with the revenue derived from the conservancy, 'because of the great Charge incident [thereto].'<sup>4</sup> The suburbs gained from the work, but contributed nothing, although their presence added to the increase of its difficulties. In every department, to a greater or lesser degree, the same was true. Administration was proving more expensive, and the maintenance of rights and privileges more difficult. Yet the City by refusing to extend its borders to take in the suburbs had condemned itself. Without them it could not widen the base of its revenues; in opposition to them it had to waste its substance delaying the inevitable; and, all the time, the advantages of low taxation, freedom from burdensome offices, and escape from Company regulations were combining to draw its citizens out through the gates to swell the strength of rivals.

It is not necessary to sketch here the downward progress of the City's financial position, but it is important to realize

<sup>1</sup> In 1671 they had become so numerous that a committee was nominated to devise a more effectual way of executing the processes obtained against offenders in the courts of conservancy: (*Repert.*, 76, f. 283). A Mr. Leech was employed to view and note the encroachments and was paid, apparently for this, the huge sum of £117 5s. 9d.

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 49, f. 259.

<sup>3</sup> The Committee of 1668 considered that the holding of the actual courts should not cost more than £300 p.a. In the years 1637 to 1667 it had averaged rather more than £430 p.a. (*Guildhall Recs.*, MS. 86, 5), a fact which evoked their strong condemnation. This was effective for a time, but the committees of 1672, 1673, and 1680 had all to record that the sum of £300 had been exceeded.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. xcvi.

that for more than twenty years it had been known to those in authority, and that determined efforts had been made to bring about an improvement. During the period from 1649 to 1654 the Common Council had done its utmost to check expenses and to increase revenues. It had investigated abuses and tried to abolish them, and it had sought for new sources of income and tried to tap them. Inspired in part by the political and religious ideas then dominant, it had even struck at the patronage of the Mayor and Sheriffs. This was the heart of the problem. Mayor and Sheriffs between them disposed of the most valuable offices in the administration of the city. The rich attornies of the sheriffs' courts, and the humble meters of onions, fruit and salt, alike helped to swell their revenues. From the solicitor and the comptroller of the chamber to the City workmen, by sale or by tribute, they received money whenever those offices changed hands.<sup>1</sup> The increase in the activities of the city were thus reflected in their receipts, and they were compensated for a century long drop in the value of money by sources which adjusted themselves to meet it. The City, by contrast, had an income which could only be altered by very slow degrees. In face of the rise in prices and the increase in the work demanded from it, it was more helpless than its own chief officers.<sup>2</sup> Hence, when Puritan and democratic ideas<sup>3</sup> coalesced with financial urgency to generate reforms, all types of reformer looked on patronage as their chief enemy. They attacked it in the spirit of the Root and Branch Bill, and for a time they were successful. But permanent success could only be obtained if sufficient funds could be

<sup>1</sup> They did not receive anything from the few offices which were either elective or in the hands of the court of Aldermen or of Common Council. The chamberlain and the bridgemasters, for example, were elected.

<sup>2</sup> The coincidence of the reforms with the generally accepted date for the end of the rise in prices is interesting, though fortuitous.

<sup>3</sup> John Lilburne's tracts 'London's Liberties in Chains' and 'The Charters of London, or the Second Part of London's Liberty in Chains' (1646) are excellent examples. The law and the scriptures are there drawn into a fierce denunciation of all who tyrannically deprive the citizens of their rights. The Aldermen were to be subjected to annual election, and the Mayor, Sheriffs, Aldermen and officers of the city to be chosen by the whole body of the freemen.

found to convert the Mayor and the Sheriffs into salaried officials for the period of their office. Their expenses were heavy and, robbed of patronage which was legally theirs, they could not support them. The reformers granted them allowances and at the same time tried to reduce their expenses by cutting down the splendour of their hospitality. Unfortunately for the financial future of the City, the grants were regarded as insufficient, and the attempt failed. A good and popular Lord-Mayor-elect refused the office, 'the ancient perquisites and late allowances made in consideration thereof being wholly taken away',<sup>1</sup> and in September 1653 the movement was virtually terminated with a vote that the next Lord Mayor should have all that had been enjoyed by any mayor during the twenty years prior to 1649.<sup>2</sup> Thus the most ambitious and constructive of the Common Council's efforts came to nought.<sup>3</sup> The state of the City's finances had however been thoroughly aired and, if the improvements made were mostly at the expense of the future,<sup>4</sup> the debts had been reduced, and the future had been left under no illusions concerning the need for care. Those in authority in 1666 knew the weaknesses of their inheritance and, if they seemed niggardly or over-cautious, their actions had every justification that prudence and good stewardship could supply.

The results of the reforming movement and the debt of the City in 1666 are shown in the table on p. 177.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 61, f. 236v. The mayor-elect, John Kendricke, was subsequently prevailed upon to take office, agreeing to do so 'for the City's quiet and peace': (*ibid.*, f. 240).

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 41, f. 88v.

<sup>3</sup> The whole movement may be traced in *Jor.*, 41, ff. 1-152 *passim*. It was complicated by the resentment of the Court of Aldermen against the general attack which was being made upon them and upon their privileges. If the financial reforms could have been dissociated from the latter, more might have been accomplished.

<sup>4</sup> The revenue was increased, *inter alia*, by sanctioning the renewal of leases within 15 years of expiry for terms up to 61 years, in total, provided that the fine was not less than 11 years' purchase: (*Jor.*, 41, f. 65). All possible speed was made with the sale of the remaining lands held as security for loans made to James I and Charles I (the 'Royal Contract').

<sup>5</sup> These figures have been compiled from the *City Cash Books*, the *Orphans' Ledgers*, and the ledgers of debts due from the City. Whilst they represent what are, I hope, accurate computations or transcriptions, it must always be remembered that they are

For nine years the improvement had been steady, and in the aggregate it was remarkable. By 1658 the combined debt had been reduced by a third, with a corresponding and most welcome reduction in the annual interest payable. Then the tide had turned. The expenses of the Restoration had been heavy, and changes in personnel had weakened the strength of the reformers. Expenditure again annually exceeded income, and only a fraction of the increase in the debt was represented by new assets.<sup>1</sup> The purchase of three of the coal meters' places for £2550 had been a shrewd bargain, and unusually heavy expenditure on the water supply a necessary capital improvement. The chamberlain's cash position had improved by some £26,000, and the debts due to the City by slightly less. Even after the subtraction of £17,000 gross, for sales of Royal Contract Lands, and of whatever sum a modern auditor would deem a sufficient provision for 'bad and doubtful debts', there was something left. In general, however, the position had deteriorated by an amount approaching the full increase in the debt. The greatest part of that increase had been spent as though it was ordinary income, and only drastic measures would stop the same process continuing in the future. The Plague delayed reforms and increased the City's embarrassment, and the Fire came as a climax to eight years of serious retrogression.

<sup>1</sup> The £10,000 spent on entertainments for the King and Queen might possibly be included under this heading since, in ordinary times, the new charter would have cost the greater part of that sum. However, as the King was absolutely dependent for money on the good will of the citizens, he might well have made the grant for a purely nominal sum, emphasizing in the preamble that it represented a 'royal favour and bounty at this Our happy restoration'.

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not absolutely accurate totals of the liabilities under which they stand. Orphans were not credited with any excess of interest which might be due to them, over and above the sums allowed for their upbringing, until they came to draw their portions out of the Chamber. Often there was no excess, but over the whole of the accounts there was an appreciable sum. Similarly though the figures of the City debt include the principal of various funds for which it was trustee, they make no mention of the receipts from fines for leases of the Bridge lands. These were paid over to it by an order dated February 16th, 1653, but their first appearance in the *City Cash Books* was in 1666, when they amounted to £17,279 3s. 4d.

(The accuracy of the figures of the Orphans' debt owes much to the kind help of Mr. P. E. Jones of the Records Office at the Guildhall.)



# FUNDS FOR PUBLIC REBUILDING

Year ending Michael- mas	ORDINARY DEBT				DEBT TO ORPHANS				Total of Ordinary Debt and Debt to Orphans
	Borrowed		Repaid		ORPHANS' PORTIONS		Total Outstanding		
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	Received	Repaid	Outstanding		
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	(to nearest £)	(to nearest £)	(to nearest £)	(to nearest £)	
1649	23,450	0 0	24,500	0 0	13,755	13,455	169,654	264,067	
1650	17,296	17 6	21,610	0 0	8,580	13,140	165,095	255,191	
1651	34,140	0 0	38,041	0 0	3,271	8,845	159,521	245,716	
1652	5,000	0 0	13,074	0 0	4,925	14,065	150,381	228,502	
1653	7,822	10 0	15,375	7 6	1,721	17,588	134,514	200,777	
1654	15,330	0 0	15,900	0 0	9,474	18,673	125,316	191,109	
1655	12,081	10 10	8,995	0 0	12,540	13,034	124,822	195,391	
1656	22,490	0 0	25,920	0 0	9,988	19,966	114,844	181,783	
1657	23,795	0 0	22,686	2 8	9,546	20,970	103,420	171,663	
1658	18,163	6 8	8,982	10 4	10,523	16,680	97,263	174,687	
1659	24,748	16 0	24,187	11 0	14,801	11,725	100,339	178,613	
1660	16,386	0 0	19,433	6 8	12,856	7,318	105,877	180,958	
1661	16,180	0 0	18,587	10 0	19,308	9,564	115,621	187,823	
1662	11,080	17 6	19,082	5 0	34,189	7,672	142,138	206,138	
1663	8,371	15 0	15,525	14 6	42,435	8,188	176,385	213,845	
1664	3,197	10 0	17,933	3 5	31,336	15,001	192,720	236,223	
1665	6,057	2 6	5,470	0 0	36,324	6,919	222,125	265,804	
1666	2,500	0 0	5,718	0 0	31,266	14,731	238,660	278,983	

## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

A state of affairs which had already entered the danger zone at once became desperate. Much of the security behind the City's debt was reduced to ashes, and the whole of its ordinary revenue imperilled. A balance sheet in the modern sense is impossible, but the imperfect computation which follows shows clearly both how straitened the position had become just before the Fire, and how large a part of the City's resources was affected by the calamity.

### LIABILITIES AS SHOWN IN THE CITY'S BOOKS AT MICHAELMAS 1666<sup>1</sup>

	£	s.	d.
Sundry creditors, including certain trust funds	40,322	11	7
The Bridgemasters, on account of fines for leases of lands belonging to London Bridge	17,279	3	4
The Orphans	238,660	1	1½
Total	296,261	16	0½

### ASSETS AS ABOVE, OR AS COMPUTED

#### (A) Items unaffected or only indirectly affected by the Fire:

Debtors sperate (including plate and jewels valued at £1500, and two seacoal-meters' places at their purchase price of £1700)	44,958	4	6½
Debtors desperate	70,858	10	4½
Chamberlain's balance	27,830	11	9½
The Manor of Finsbury	10,000	0	0
The lands of the Royal Contract	2,500	0	0
Fees and receipts from the admission of freemen, the enrolment of apprentices, and the discharge or 'turning over' of apprentices	14,000	0	0

#### B) Items directly affected by the Fire:

Lands and tenements belonging to the City, less charges secured on them	83,500	0	0
Various rent farms, including the markets belonging to the City, less charges secured on them	28,000	0	0
Total	281,599	6	8½

<sup>1</sup> The liability to Orphans should be increased as indicated in footnote no. 5 on p. 175, and the total liabilities by an item for accounts owing but unpaid. How large this latter item should be can only be guessed, but £1000 would probably be its maximum. Taking the assets one by one, the first must be reduced by at least £8000 for debts subsequently remitted or written off as desperate. The second was worth nothing. It remained on the books unaltered until 1672 when it disappeared in a general tidying up of the accounts. The third is an exact figure. For the fourth and seventh I have followed the method used by the makers of the valuation of 1650. The former was held on long lease from St. Paul's, and the latter, the City's 'Rental General', included everything from valuable freeholds to small fees for leave to use its Wall or to encroach on its streets. Despairing of any scientific computation, the valuers in 1650 took this miscellaneous collection as a whole, multiplied the beneficial rents by three to arrive at the

## FUNDS FOR PUBLIC REBUILDING

On paper, the position was not unduly serious, but no auditing committee could accept that position. Carefully considered the face value of some of the items needed drastic revision. The liabilities were too low by at least £5000, the assets too high by perhaps £75,000. The City knew that this was so before the Fire added to its difficulties. With liabilities of rather over £300,000, and valid assets of little more than £200,000; with an ordinary revenue of approximately £12,000 p.a., and an expenditure of roughly twice that amount, it had felt understandably uncomfortable. The Fire, by burning much of its property and scattering the bulk of the citizens beyond its jurisdiction, might have been expected to cripple it beyond all hope. Heavy capital expenditure was needed in order to restore what the flames had destroyed, at a time when the sources of revenue had been seriously damaged. Fortunately the City's credit remained unimpaired. The in-flow of orphans' portions continued<sup>1</sup> and borrowing was unchecked.

<sup>1</sup> It has frequently been stated that orphans' portions had to be paid into the chamber. This is flatly contradicted by the City's own instructions printed and issued to the executors and administrators of the estates of freemen (see *Guildhall Lib.*, An. 12. 3), by the various compilations dealing with the laws and customs of London (for example, 'Lex Londinensis', anon. 1680), and by the practice of the City as shown in the records of the court of orphans contained in the Repertories. On giving good security, in the form of recognizances, it was always open to those concerned to retain the money until it became due. (R. D. Richards failed to observe the existence of this constantly used alternative — see *The Early History of Banking in England* (1929), p. 107.)

rack rent, and assessed the Finsbury lands at eight years' purchase, and those of the City at eight and a half. I have done the same but, influenced by post-Fire practices, have taken ten years' purchase in each case. The fifth item is based on net sales subsequent to 1666. The sixth, the fees for the freemen and apprentices, is the average for the three years 1661-64 at ten years' purchase. The eighth is calculated at seven years' purchase of the amounts at which they were let in 1692. The efforts of the City to bring their revenues to a maximum make it certain that by then they were not undervalued, whereas on the basis of the figures for the 1660s they would have been. Non-revenue-producing assets and the lands in Ireland have been omitted. The value of the former was great before the Fire, but, after it, represented a heavy liability. A guildhall in ruins, blocked sewers and waterless pipes could console neither the chamberlain nor the chamber's creditors. Strictly speaking, the assets in Ireland might not come into the same class, but their produce was so infrequent that, with Londonderry town devastated by fire soon afterwards, it is simpler to ignore them.

It must be stressed that no accurate balance sheet can be drawn up. The one given took many weeks to complete. By spending still more time on it, it could undoubtedly be improved in various particulars, but the general effect would remain unchanged.

There was no run upon the chamber and no difficulty in raising fresh loans. Even revenue remained buoyant. The usual receipts declined, but the deficiency was more than made good by fines to escape the offices of alderman or sheriff. So great was the dislike felt for the heavy duties of those offices, that man after man paid sums varying from three to seven hundred pounds to avoid them. Six of the wards were unrepresented for most of the year following the Fire, each successive choice desiring leave to fine, and the harvest continued during the years which followed. Nevertheless, though masked the danger was there. Good credit and temporary windfalls could not meet it. In the bleak words of the committee appointed to consider the City's finances<sup>1</sup> 'the State of the Chamber is evidently such and so farr declined as doth require the most speedy and utmost care and modesty to recover and sustaine it . . . from utter decay and ruine; for what by mis-employment of the Treasure in the late troubles and other ill managements and since by Expences extraordinary, especially that have bene occasioned by the dreadfull visitacion of the Plague, and the more dismall fire (wherein the Guildhall Exchange and all the Prisons and most of the Gates and publique Edifices of the Citty have bene consumed) the Debt hath still increased though the receipts (above the usuall revenue) have farr exceeded the incomb of any former times, by fines of Aldermen and Chamber and Bridghouse Leases etc. which in the last fifteen yeares have amounted to above £200,000. By which it may appeare when those Extraordi-

<sup>1</sup> Appointed on February 12th, 1668, this, its interim report, was dated October 21st in that year. It was presented to the Common Council on the 23rd of the following month: (*Jor.*, 46, ff. 251-2). The scope and thoroughness of its proposals show how seriously it had taken its task.

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Since a general effect alone is needed here, it seems sufficient to present it with a warning that nothing more exact is intended.

The valuation of 1650 was carried out by a committee appointed on July 3rd in that year: (*Jor.*, 41, f. 28). Their report, dated August 26th, is not in the Journals. Fortunately it was used, apparently in its entirety, by an anonymous but shrewd pamphleteer, who added various comments and called it 'Newes from Guildhall': (B.M., Tracts, E. 620, 480). The value given in it to the City's interests in Ireland is £20,000.

## FUNDS FOR PUBLIC REBUILDING

narys cease (as in great measure they do already) how vastly the debt will increase yearly, and how suddenly the case will become desperate and incurable, unlesse some cheque bee put and remedy speedily applied thereunto'.

The committee were fortunate in their draughtsman. The case could not have been summarized more concisely. There was no exaggeration. The state of the chamber made it quite impossible for new commitments to be assumed. It could not meet, unaided, an expenditure of £100,000 for the restoration of public buildings whose gross yield when completed would not even provide the interest on that sum, and general improvements were out of the question unless funds were granted to finance them. The City's attitude towards replanning London as a whole, and towards its own rebuilding programme in particular, was ruled and explained by this. The state of its finances compelled it to look to Parliament for help, and without that help it dare not venture. Its petitions for aid were as justified as the prayers of drought-stricken villagers for rain. The trickle of its own revenues could not produce a tenth of its needs, and when it declared that it had 'noe common Stocke, nor Revenue, nor any capacity to raise within itselfe anything considerable towards so vast an Expense',<sup>1</sup> it spoke the bitter words of truth in calamity. It did not expect a grant in aid, but it could and did expect the grant of the right to levy a tax which would fall upon all those who stood to benefit from the restoration of its activities.

### § II—THE COAL DUES

Parliament's first response to the needs of the City was even more inadequate than its provision for those of the royal administration. In the Rebuilding Act of 1667 it granted a duty on coal so niggardly that the City might almost have appealed in vain. What the latter thought of it is not known; but if the vigilant city divines preached that Sunday from Luke xi, 11, no man could blame them. Nothing had been done for

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 72, f. 43v.

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their churches, nothing for the great cathedral of St. Paul, nothing for the City's ruined buildings. Parliament had granted the right to collect for ten years one shilling per chaldron or ton on all coal brought into the port of London.<sup>1</sup> That was all, and even that all was wrapped in hampering conditions. The citizens were to pay — that was unavoidable, for no help was available from outside — but they were not to be allowed to apply the sum as they wished. It was laid down that it was to be used first 'for the satisfaction of such persons whose Grounds . . . shall . . . be taken . . . for the inlarging of the Streets and narrow passages . . . And after satisfaction given for the same the residue . . . applyed . . . for the satisfaction of such persons whose Grounds shall be imployed for the making of Wharfes or Keyes on the North side of the River of Thames, and upon each side of . . . Bridewell Docke, Fleet Ditch and Turnmill Brooke, and also for the building and makeing such Prisons within the . . . Citty as shall be necessary for the safe custody and Imprisonment of Felons and other Malefactors'.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the royal administration it is possible to argue that the inadequacy of some of the parliamentary grants was due to genuine errors in the estimation of their yield, but it is hard to believe that the size of the grant to the city can have been due either to ignorance or to mistaken judgment. On the one hand, the previous three years had seen a thorough examination of the state of the coal trade, rounded off by a statute regulating certain of its aspects,<sup>3</sup> and, in addition, the coal-meters' places were regularly bought and sold and their value known. On the other, the new survey of the city showed roughly what money would be needed for the Quay, the Fleet Canal, and those widenings which had already been agreed

<sup>1</sup> First Act, s. 34. The ten years began on June 24th, 1667.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., s. 37. The wording of the sentence about prisons is important. Not all the prisons within the city were for 'Felons and other Malefactors' if the latter was construed as other malefactors of the order of felons. One of the best informed of the many attacks made on the City's administration of the dues used this point in its list of accusations.

<sup>3</sup> See the report of a committee appointed at the instance of Charles II (*For.*, 46, f. 22v *et seq.*), and the statute which provided for the regulation of measures and prices, (16 & 17 Charles II, c. 2).

upon. On the particulars available for the coal trade, the maximum yield of the duty could not exceed £15,000 per annum — £150,000, for the whole ten years — and the survey showed that the land required for the Quay from London Bridge to the Temple alone would take approximately that figure. Possibly the City had concealed the true state of its revenues; possibly Parliament considered, and rightly, that many citizens were rich, and that they should therefore bear the cost. Whatever the reason, the first Act left the City with insufficient funds for the general improvements and with no contribution to its own rebuilding programme except a share in such money as might be left over after paying for street-widening, even that share being limited to work on the prisons.

This grievous handicap continued for the first three years of the rebuilding. Then the second Act improved the position.<sup>1</sup> Declaring with simple truth that it would 'require far greater Sums of Money to give Satisfaction for the Ground to be taken', it imposed an additional duty of two shillings from May 1st, 1670, and continued the consolidated duties for ten and a quarter years after the end of the original term. Three-quarters of the extra duty was earmarked for the rebuilding or repairing of the burnt churches, with a proviso that a quarter of that sum might be spent on St. Paul's, and the remaining quarter was assigned to the City. The City's quarter was not to be used at will, but there were no detrimental rules about priority.<sup>2</sup> In addition it was possible to interpret the wording in such a way that the priorities imposed by the first Act disappeared during the extension of the one shilling duty from 1677 to 1687. Leaving this aside, however, it was made all too clear that, first charge or no first charge, the money granted could only

<sup>1</sup> See ss. 33, 34, 36 and 42. The City voted Sir Richard Ford £150 for his services, especially those connected with the passage of this Act 'To which an encrease of time for the Cole duty was obteyned by his singular endeavour': (*Reper.*, 75, f. 159).

<sup>2</sup> The actual wording is obscure. If there was a first charge on the City's 6d. per ton it was for making the Fleet Canal, with a residue to the buying of land for that purpose. Certainly the cost of making the canal was to come before buying the land for it, but whether it had priority over payments for the markets and the additional widenings is not clear. For details of the canal scheme see Chap. viii.

be spent on the projects mentioned in the two Acts. So far as the City was concerned the duties could therefore be used for buying land required for the streets, the public markets, the Fleet Canal, the Thames Quay, and for the better setting out and the securing from fire of certain of its buildings.<sup>1</sup> They could also be used for work on the Fleet Canal, but there was no sanction for financing any other work from them. No ordinary interpretation of the wording could produce authority to pay out of them for the reconstruction of the City's own buildings. The position was therefore improved, but it was very far from being perfect. The crowding applicants could hope that the money for their ground would be paid with less delay, but the City itself was left unprovided.

The change was quickly reflected in the attitude of the authorities. With seventeen years instead of seven, a duty increased by half, and the right to raise loans on its security, the City could afford to meet the clamour of the applicants. On July 20th, 1670, the City Lands Committee resolved that 'all persons who have had warrants for paiment of any sums at 6 monthes end out of the Cole mony in Satisfaction for Ground laid into the Streetes, giving Security to be app[ro]ved of by the Comptroler, shall presently receive the s<sup>d</sup> money'.<sup>2</sup> Those concerned rushed to avail themselves of the offer, scores of bonds were given,<sup>3</sup> and the rate of payments out of the dues doubled. Their yield was exceeded, but the City used its new powers and borrowed upon them. Thereafter, with occasional alarms about the ability of the dues to meet the claims upon them,<sup>4</sup> payments proceeded smoothly and

<sup>1</sup> In May 1667 the City had petitioned the King to authorize the last of these and he, always concerned for the beauty of his capital, had at once given his consent, ordering that the work should be carried out: (*Repert.*, 72, f. 100; *P.C. Reg.*, 2/59, pp. 409-10). The buildings concerned were the Royal Exchange, the Guildhall, the Sessions House, and the common gaols and prisons. Improvements were made to nearly all of them.

<sup>2</sup> *C.L.O.*, f. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Many of them may be seen amongst the committee's papers from 1670 onwards.

<sup>4</sup> In June 1679 the Committee calculated that the future yield might not be enough to cover the outstanding loans for which it was security. They therefore suspended the signing of warrants for staked ground until October 1679, when they repealed their earlier order.



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with less delay. By contrast, the City's own programme remained as great a source of anxiety as ever.

Before considering the collection and uses of the dues it may be well to set out their yield. This was not predictable. Fluctuations were violent, the worst year producing less than half that of the best, but they were expected. Weather conditions were always an important influence, and war years might do anything. A hard winter drove up consumption, just as a mild one reduced it, and the dues waxed or waned accordingly. The effects of war were still more marked. The long line of the colliers' route down the east coast stood wide open to Dutch interference. Their capers lay in wait for the fleets, frightening many masters into refusal to sail and capturing a high proportion of those brave enough to make the attempt. During the third Dutch war, the menace became so great that in 1672, failing help from the Crown, the City was even compelled to institute its own system of convoys. The results were not too happy, but if the Dutch believed, as was reported, that London would mutiny if the supply could be cut off,<sup>1</sup> the worst was averted. Other causes, both in war and in peace, contributed to the changes in the yield, but none to the extent of the two outlined. Apart from war, their long-term effect was not serious. The great advantage of coal from the City's point of view was that it was an essential to the life of the inhabitants. If supplies were hard to obtain in any year, cellars and wharves were scoured clean, and, though the duties might suffer at the time, compensation came from the increased imports of the following season.

Taken year by year, amounts received from collectors were:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1672-73, p. 240. The Dutch may have been over-optimistic but the extraordinary concern shown by the Privy Council and the City that supplies should not be cut off shows that they had some foundation for their hopes.

<sup>2</sup> To the nearest pound, except for the totals, which are exact. The figures cannot be used as an infallible guide to the amount of coal imported during the corresponding year. 'Poor coals' were exempt, and the collectors, despite many attempts to enforce daily payments, often had large sums in hand. Nevile, the worst offender, had by Christmas 1669 only paid in £25,192 7s. 6d. out of the £30,557 10s. 6d. he had then received. There were also fraudulent under-payments by shippers and others.

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To Michael- mas	1/- Duty beginning June 24th, 1667	2/- Duty			The City's total during the year from both duties
		City's proportion	Churches' proportion	St. Paul's proportion	
	£	£	£	£	£
1667	800				800
1668	10,700				10,700
1669	11,140				11,140
1670	15,531		10,246	3,415	20,085
1671	12,047	4,554	13,489	4,496	18,042
1672	8,784	5,995	9,884	3,295	13,177
1673	8,082	4,393	9,143	3,048	12,146
1674	12,366	4,064	13,380	4,460	18,313
1675	11,818	5,947	13,474	4,491	17,807
1676	11,587	5,988	13,593	4,531	17,629
Midsummer 1677	6,629	6,042			
		3,314	7,457	2,486	9,943
Totals	£109,485 0 10	£40,296 9 10	£90,667 2 1½	£30,222 7 4½	£149,781 10 8

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To Michaelmas	3/- DUTY (beginning June 24th, 1677)			Total duty during the year
	City's proportion	Churches' proportion	St. Paul's proportion	
	£	£	£	£
1677	9,124	6,843	2,281	18,249
1678	21,791	16,343	5,448	43,582
1679	19,164	14,373	4,791	38,328
1680	20,515	15,386	5,129	41,029
1681	22,814	17,111	5,704	45,628
1682	20,742	15,557	5,186	41,485
1683	24,093	18,070	6,023	48,186
1684	24,347	18,260	6,087	48,693
1685	23,251	17,438	5,813	46,502
1686	21,637	16,228	5,409	43,275
1687	22,359	16,769	5,590	44,717
29th March 1688 <sup>1</sup>	3,229	2,422	807	6,459
Total	£233,066 14 6	£174,800 0 10½	£58,266 13 7½	£466,133 9 0

The total yield of the duties, as received from the collectors,<sup>2</sup> therefore amounted to £736,804 9s. 2d., out of which the City received £382,848 5s. 2d., the parish churches £265,467 3s. od., and St. Paul's £88,489 1s. od. The value of the fund to all three can easily be conceived. Its yield was as regular and as certain as any tax then known, and its security readily accepted by lenders. The parishes could look forward hopefully to the restoration of their churches, and those persons who had suffered from public improvements to receiving compensation therefor. By contrast, the restrictions placed upon the use of the City's share meant that its difficulties were only partially solved. It was spending each year on its own rebuilding programme more than the equivalent of its normal yearly income. At the same time its ordinary expenditure was increased by the results of the Fire and the migration consequent thereon. To meet this double drain it had no

<sup>1</sup> Winding up the duties and completing the settlement of the collector's accounts lasted until this date.

<sup>2</sup> The actual yield was greater by £4539 4s. od.: Nevile's arrears persisted and, whilst that was the case, the City refused to pay him his salary. In a final settlement, the arrears were set off against the salary and other charges then owing. The balance alone was entered, and therefore both yield and expenditure have to be increased by the amount shown above. The details of the settlement may be found in *Repert.*, 85, f. 143v.

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additions to revenue except the precarious flow of Aldermen's fines. For five years it struggled on, with the position growing steadily worse. The annual accounts need no commentary:

<i>Year to Michaelmas</i>	<i>Income<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Expenditure<sup>1</sup></i>
	£	£
1667	20,590	26,884
1668	20,148	31,435
1669	23,650	37,509
1670	18,478	40,958
1671	13,898	48,924
1672	15,250	45,623

At the end the Chamberlain's balance had declined from nearly £28,000 to just over £1000, and the City's indebtedness stood at:<sup>2</sup>

£	s.	d.	
87,880	18	3	to various creditors
15,664	3	4	to the Bridge
297,574	8	6	to the Orphans

a nett increase of well over a third on figures which in 1666 were already dangerously high. Affairs had reached such a state that, taken together, the interest payable on the first and on the last items actually exceeded the City's normal income, and its position, though longer concealed, was in reality as desperate as that of Charles II. In that year the King resorted to the 'Stop' of the Exchequer. The City, more fortunately placed, raided the Coal dues.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To the nearest pound, and excluding the balance brought in. Less than £3000 was spent on rebuilding during the first year. Thereafter the increase was steady, reaching £17,000 (out of the City's cash) in 1672. Aldermen's and Sheriffs' fines produced £38,766 12s. od. in the six years.

<sup>2</sup> Against this it had, apart from the raid on the Coal dues, some £45,000 in reasonably good debts (see above).

<sup>3</sup> There was no direct connection between the embarrassment of the King and that of the City. Both were due to an excess of expenditure over revenue. The often made statement that the City lost all its own funds, as well as those of the Orphans, by lending them to Charles, is simply fantastic. (For examples, see A. Pulling, *Laws and Customs*

This step temporarily saved the situation. In effect, the restrictions imposed by the Acts were swept aside. The City transferred to the dues all expenditure on its works and public buildings which could reasonably be ascribed to the effects of the Fire, and charged as loans to them the amounts it had already paid out on that score. The legality of the action was doubtful,<sup>1</sup> its expediency undeniable. The clerks credited the City with £57,250, due from the coal dues 'for amounts lent and paid out of the Chamber for public buildings within the City', charged interest on part of it, and thenceforward entered all such items in the Coal Books instead of in the City cash.<sup>2</sup> The effect was magical — a present to the City of £120,000, and relief from all the worry of rebuilding finance. The omissions of Parliament had been made good, and the necessity to follow Charles into a moratorium postponed for eleven years.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was apparently justified by construing references in the Acts to 'other public purposes' in the broadest sense possible, and the accounts suggest that even so it was not done without doubts and difficulties. The City paid George Jeffreys fees of £100 and £50 for his advice on matters relating to the public works appointed by the Act, and spent £43 16s. 6d. on feeing counsel in order to settle the coal accounts. The court of Exchequer apparently took some convincing as to the legality of the matter.

<sup>2</sup> The change-over was made from midsummer 1672, and from thenceforward the detailed entries for the expenditure on public rebuilding move over to the Coal Books. Block items, the yearly totals from the City accounts, were transferred to show the amount spent up to that time, the heading stating that they had been disbursed by the Chamberlain from moneys 'borrowed for that end out of the orphans Cash remaining in his hands'. Interest was only charged on certain of these items. Those chosen suggest that Wood Street Compter, Ludgate and Bridewell were not considered to be prisons falling within the definition in the first Act, and that, as might be expected, it was the obscure wording of the second Act which had been used to justify the transfer.

<sup>3</sup> After 1683 the City ceased to make ordinary repayments of its debt either to Orphans or to other creditors. It also reduced the interest paid to 2½ per cent.

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*of London* (1849), p. 114, and the evidence of the City solicitor before the select committee on the Orphans' Fund, in *Parliamentary Papers*, 1829, III, 309, pp. 20-2. R. D. Richards (op. cit., p. 109) accepted these sources, declaring that orphans' money and the deposits of freemen in the chamber were lent to the Exchequer, and that the tallies given for them and for loans raised through the agency of the City proved worthless.) The sober facts are that in 1672 the King owed the City £1740 which was repaid as to £1240 in 1675, and as to £500 in 1677, whilst all save the last of the loans raised through the agency of the City had been repaid before the Stop of the Exchequer. The last, on the Fee Farm Rents, was for £60,000. £34,315 17s. 11d. of this sum had been repaid before October 1672, when John Lyndsey, goldsmith, agreed to take over the balance, satisfying the remaining lenders. He was 'very far advanced' with this work in April 1674: (*Cal. Treas. Bks.*, 1669-72, p. 1334, and 1672-75, p. 511).

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### § III — PAYMENTS OUT OF THE DUES

The coal dues in their revised form were used for many purposes. They not only saved the position of the City by paying for its new public buildings, but also made it possible for future citizens to live in a better and cleaner London. By the actions of King, Parliament and City, they were gradually developed from their first restricted functions into a general 'improvements and rebuilding' fund. The King's initiation of the scheme for taking the markets out of the streets started this development, and his acceptance of the City's request that its buildings might be better set out took it a step further. In 1670 Parliament provided legislative sanction for these early innovations, and, a year later, probably at the City's instigation, made a fresh move by allowing them to be drawn upon to pay for ground to be used as laystalls and as places for public stores.<sup>1</sup> Finally the City, by its raid, turned them into the main fund for its own rebuilding programme and, once that raid had been successfully accomplished, treated them as a source from which to finance any expenditure connected with their own yield or use. Hence a final analysis of the ends to which they were put provides a commentary on the whole wide range of public rebuilding.

First and foremost in the analysis came payments for widening streets and segregating markets.<sup>2</sup> Land was taken for the

<sup>1</sup> 22 & 23 Charles II, c. 17, ss. 9 and 10.

<sup>2</sup> The payments out of the coal dues are entered in chronological order, without any attempt to post them under headings. If the provisions of the Acts which earmarked the receipts had been observed, this might have been done later, but, as they were set aside, it never became necessary, and the thousands of jumbled entries remain absolutely unsorted. The following attempt to separate them is substantially accurate so far as the main heads are concerned, but in the case of individual buildings the margin of error may be much wider. The entries include a number of block items which can only be assigned as fancy dictates. Sums paid 'for work at several publick places' or 'for work done about the publick buildings' cannot possibly be allocated except by guesswork, and those for several named buildings are not much better. Some help is obtainable from a manuscript book in the Guildhall Library (MS. 184, part 2), which apparently began its life as a record of the sums spent on each of the various public works undertaken after the Fire, whether occasioned by it or not. Possibly it was originally an

enlargement of nearly one hundred and fifty streets, lanes and alleys. From the majesty of Cheapside to the humble obscurity of riverside passages, all parts of the burnt area shared in this form of improvement. Individually most were unspectacular, but each was valuable. The markets showed up more vividly. Honey Lane and the market south of Newgate Street were brand new sites, relieving the streets of the stalls and standings which had blocked them in the days before the Fire. The Stocks Market was purchased from the Bridge, its owner, and, with the help of additional land, the whole lay-out changed, again to the advantage of the adjacent streets, whilst Leadenhall Market, which had not been burnt, was enlarged for the same reason.<sup>1</sup> These two sets of improvements together cost £74,754 9s. 5d.<sup>2</sup> plus annual rents and tithes which, to the expiry of the dues, amounted to £1861 1s. 5d. Next in interest came the magnificent venture of the Fleet Canal — perhaps the finest single attempt to deal with London's rivers made between the building of old London Bridge and the construction of the

<sup>1</sup> Leadenhall Market received the ground of two gardens, adjoining its south-west angle, each 100 feet by 50, and, apparently, certain tofts belonging to the City lying on the west side of the Green Yard. The Stocks Market had been leased to William Osbalston, who had sixteen years to run. The City paid him £140 in compensation, and the Bridge received £720. Against this the City received £80 for the materials of the old building. Part of the additional ground bought involved the payment of two annuities. These the City paid out of its own funds. The freehold of land required for improvements, other than street widening, was not always bought, hence the annual rents shown. These I have totalled up to the end of the dues. After that time the City had to pay them out of its own resources, a fact which caused it much concern.

<sup>2</sup> This is the figure for the moneys which changed hands. The total cost was increased by a number of cases in which land required by the City was obtained by exchanging it for a plot already owned by the City. For examples, see *Guildhall Recs.*, Deeds 99. 9, and *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 3108. As against this the City received appreciable sums for land taken in from the streets in order to make frontages run evenly. For examples, see *City Cash Books*, 1/14 ff. 133, 214v, 215.

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extract from the City's accounts made to show how much could be placed on the coal dues and was continued later as a useful record of the costing of the buildings. After midsummer 1672 it became a subsidiary record, sometimes omitting items found in the coal duty accounts. The detailed entries cease in July 1676, though rough totals have been added later in another hand. These have often been used as the actual figures for the buildings under which they appear. Unfortunately, as the clerk usually entered payments for several places under the first named on the warrant, this tempting short cut cannot be used even for the buildings recorded. Payments for land for streets and markets are not normally shown in it.

present-day embankment. Land for this cost £24,422 13s. 2d., rents £472, and works £55,981 1s. od. Connected with it, though not part of it, was the scheme for new laystalls and places for public stores. The purchase of various interests in the ground for these took £5100 11s. 8d., and rents of £484 per annum had also to be paid on them. In all, these rents came to £10,571 5s. od., with a further £241 2s. 5d. for tithes — a burden so heavy that in 1688 the City spent £3000 on the acquisition of the freehold of the Dowgate laystall.<sup>1</sup> Work on fitting out and improvement, including wharfing some of them out into the river, added £7087 13s. 7d., making the total spent on this most necessary reform £26,000 12s. 8d.

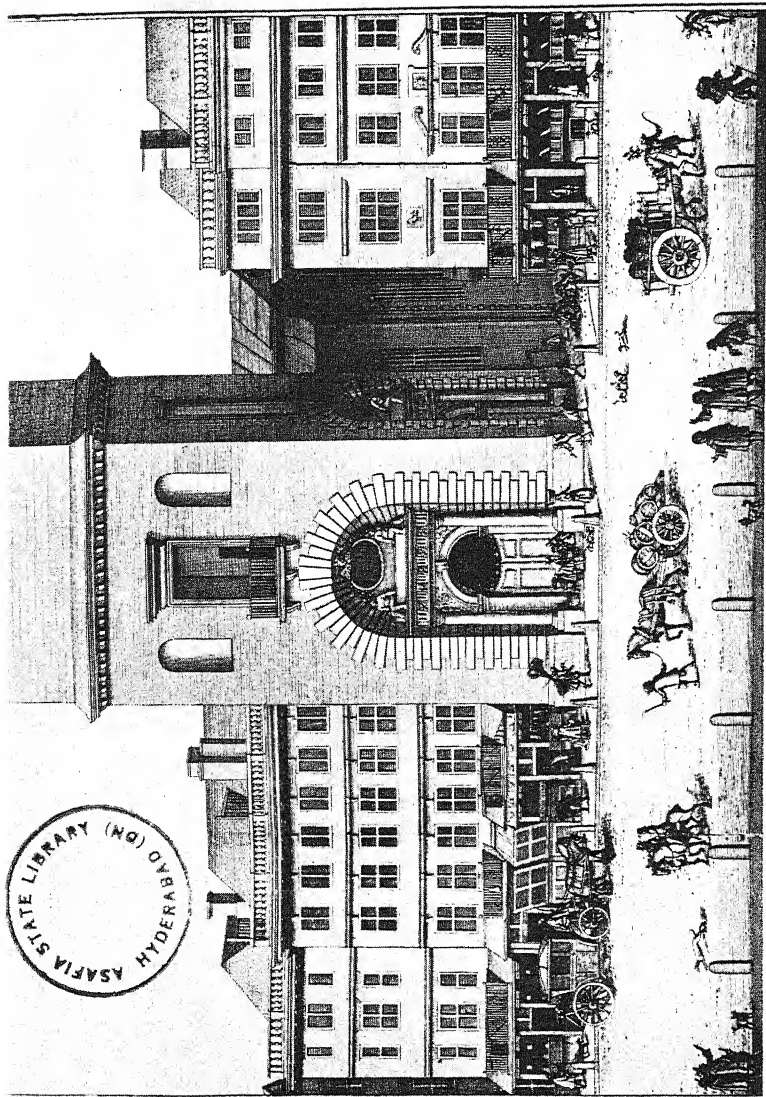
So much for the more specialized improvements. Expenditure on the general rebuilding programme was nearly as great and much more varied. From the clearing and paving of streets damaged by the Fire,<sup>2</sup> to the building of the Monument which commemorates it, most aspects of the life and appearance of the rebuilt area were affected. The coal dues paid for new public landing places or 'stairs' along the river side.<sup>3</sup> They were drawn upon to finance the construction of buildings for the new markets, and to cleanse and repair the old sewers where the Fire and its debris had blocked or damaged

<sup>1</sup> This was paid out of the balance of its share of the dues, £3098 12d. 3½d. In my figure, I have therefore included it under laystalls and subtracted it from the balance. The purchase reduced the rents payable by £117 per annum and removed the need to pay a heavy fine at the renewal of the lease.

<sup>2</sup> The paving should in theory have been done by the frontagers, but, since many of them had not returned, and some had not rebuilt, and as the work could not be left undone, the cost of the high streets was borne by the dues. These streets were posted — a valuable innovation on such a scale — and the foot-paths were left for the inhabitants to do: (*For.*, 47, f. 94). Later on, sums were spent on making up the roads to the new laystalls.

<sup>3</sup> It is difficult for those who know only the modern half-deserted city landing steps to realize how important a part they played in the seventeenth century. The river was then the normal way for those intending to travel from the east to the west of the London area, or vice versa. Each of the riverside wards had its public stairs, where the boatmen waited in great crowds for intending travellers. To foreigners they were one of the accepted 'sights' of the city. No ward inquest would pass over defects in such stairs and, after the Fire, there were constant petitions to the City to have them rebuilt. In consequence, much work was done on those at Billingsgate, the Old Swan, the Three Cranes, Queenhithe, Trigg Lane and Blackfriars.





London rebuilt.— Cleapside with the base of the tower of St. Mary le Bow. The houses are those authorized for 'high and principle' streets, and show the signs set back against the walls, the fall-pipes, the balconies, the pent-houses, and the regulation shop-fronts, besides the general proportions of the buildings

# FUNDS FOR PUBLIC REBUILDING

them.<sup>1</sup> The list of the items runs on and on like a roll call of the city's reviving activities. Besides traffic and markets, streets and drainage, there were payments for the Sessions House, the compters in Wood Street and The Poultry, the gates and the prisons at Newgate and Ludgate, the new building at St. Andrew Hubbard to house the Beam, Bridewell, the cloth marts at Blackwell and Welch Halls, and, finally, the Guildhall, the centre and mainspring of them all. Each, in whole or in part, received help from the dues,<sup>2</sup> whilst, slipped in between their lordly demands, came the entries of the odds and ends, the inevitable and fascinating miscellany of any long-drawn-out programme. Coals to warm the Judges at Clifford's Inn; pens, ink, and stationery for their decisions; fees for passing the accounts at the Exchequer; dozens and dozens of money bags for keeping and carrying the receipts as they passed from shipper to collector, and collector to chamberlain; the repay-

<sup>1</sup> These, like the surface of the streets, were placed by s. 18 of the first Act under commissioners, whose powers included the levying of rates. As the commissioners were drawn from the Aldermen and the Common Councillors and as, for several years, they could levy nothing on the burnt areas, I have not distinguished their orders and work from those of the City proper. The distinction should, however, be remembered.

<sup>2</sup> The amounts paid out of the dues towards these items may tentatively be put at:

	£	s.	d.
Paving and sewers	3,049	0	2
The Monument (work and materials)	13,450	11	9
Wharves and stairs ( do. )	3,512	16	7
Market buildings and lay-out	4,136	17	5
Sessions House	5,448	2	0
Wood Street compter	7,700	0	0
Poultry compter	8,808	10	0
Newgate	9,568	6	6
Ludgate	4,215	12	0
Weigh-house	700	0	0
Bridewell	12,260	5	0
Blackwell Hall	10,360	0	0
Welch Hall	201	0	0
Guildhall, including the chapel and about £100 towards the			
City officers' houses in Aldermanbury	36,498	6	0
Various public buildings (block items)	3,270	7	3

Temple Bar, which, though outside the burnt area, came within the provisions of 14 Charles II, c. 2, was taken down and enlarged, the cost being met by a grant of £1500 from the 'Commissioners of Scotland Yard' set up by that Act. This covered it, with £100 to spare.

ment of Backwell's welcome loan towards staking and measuring the streets — all these were included. There were rewards for help in passing the various Acts, law costs incurred in defending them, and fees for advice about their meaning. But by far the most expensive of these miscellaneous items were the convoys provided for the coal fleets during the Dutch War. The *Loyal Catherine* under Edward Paul and the *Experiment* under James Ward, with their sixteen soldiers apiece, cost £3182 4s. 8d., besides much argument and trouble. Probably they took more out of the dues than the colliers they protected brought in, but, though their conduct was considered unsatisfactory, the City had no remedy and the dues had to pay.<sup>1</sup>

The uneven incidence of the liabilities was also a source of heavy expense. From 1670 to 1676 the calls far exceeded the receipts, and it was only by borrowing that long delay in paying could be avoided. During the years 1675 to 1678 the yield was consistently anticipated by something like nine years, and it was not until the end of 1678 that the City could feel confident of the limit of its liabilities for ground or for works.<sup>2</sup> From then on it repaid the loans as fast as it could. In all, however, interest cost the dues £58,878 2s. 7d.,<sup>3</sup> — more than a seventh of their total.

If this last item was expensive, it was partly balanced by that for the collection of the dues and the supervision of the work which they financed. At just under £18,000, this represented less than five per cent of the total of the City's receipts, a figure of which it might well have felt proud. Apart from collection,<sup>4</sup> there were no regular salaries. Those

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 77, ff. 149-278 *passim*; *Repert.*, 78, from f. 86v *passim*; *P.C. Reg.*, 2/63, p. 240. The total of the whole 'miscellaneous' group was £4963 6s. 11d.

<sup>2</sup> Always excepting its liability for the Thames Quay (See Chap. viii).

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix C. The rate of interest was six per cent, i.e. the normal charge to good borrowers. The City itself was usually able to borrow at rather less and, ironically enough, was often paying only four or five per cent just before it was compelled to declare a moratorium.

<sup>4</sup> The collectors were: for the one shilling duty, from its inception until his death on March 3rd, 1676, Thomas Nevile, Esq.; thereafter, William Bridges, merchant. For the two shilling duty, from its inception until June 17th, 1671, Thomas Christopher; thereafter, William Bridges. Bridges collected the three shilling duty throughout.

concerned in supervising and in planning were paid for what they did. Officers of the City who had rendered special services in connection with any work received a reward calculated accordingly, whilst those unconnected with the City were given presents. Thus the comptroller and the keeper of the Guildhall together received fourteen grants for 'extraordinary service, attendance and expences' or some variant of that formula,<sup>1</sup> and Hooke and Oliver were frequently paid for their 'attendances and directions concerning the publick works'. Apart from these four, the only people regularly concerned were Richard Shortgrave and William Leybourne, who measured the work before the contractors' accounts were passed for payment, and the Aldermen and Common Councillors who were ultimately responsible, and who were paid nothing. Three from outside were given presents — the registrar and assistant registrar of the Fire Court when its long labours came to an end,<sup>2</sup> and Wren, who was twice sent a hundred guineas in gold.<sup>3</sup>

The collection of the dues was less simple, and, in the troubles which clustered round it, typical of the period. Theoretically nothing could have been more perfect. Coal imports were already elaborately checked and measured, so that, if any merchant or shipper attempted to evade payment, he could at once be detected. The collector, it appeared, would have little to do beyond sitting in his office, and recording his receipts.

<sup>1</sup> The comptroller was William Wagstaffe, and later Joseph Lane; the keeper of the Guildhall, Daniel Man.

<sup>2</sup> These were made in March and in May 1677. Mr. Stephen Mundy, the registrar, was then dead, and his son James received the £100 voted to him. The assistant, Richard Antrobus, gent., was given £20.

<sup>3</sup> He was in no sense in the pay of the City. The use of guineas marked the wish to make a gift of distinction, but the amount was comparable with the much more frequent payments to the City's officers.

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Nevile's salary was one shilling in the pound, Christopher's the amount fixed by Parliament, ten shillings per £100, less £20 per annum to the chamberlain's clerks and the same to the clerk to the seacoal-meters. Bridges by the arrangement finally reached received £160 per annum until Lady Day 1676 and £220 per annum thereafter. The churches and St. Paul's paid half the second salary and they gave gratuities to the two sets of clerks. Each set of clerks was paid £20 per annum throughout, all by the City, and the Chamberlain received £100 per annum from Christmas 1672 onwards, of which the churches and St. Paul's between them paid half.

## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

To the crowd of unsatisfied men haunting Whitehall it seemed a sinecure well worth having. How many applied for it we do not know, but, the day after the signing of the Act, Thomas Nevile presented a letter from the King recommending him for the post. The Common Council accepted him, subject to such salary and rules as it should consider fitting,<sup>1</sup> and apparently no better choice could have been made. A citizen and a Merchant Taylor, Nevile was a man of standing and experience. He was a colonel in one of the city regiments, had been granted a place as King's waiter in the Customs by Charles I, and been made comptroller of the Petty Customs in the port of London by Charles II.<sup>2</sup> All should therefore have gone well, and for a time it did. The committee which audited his first year's accounts reported favourably, and suggested a salary, inclusive of expenses, of eightpence in the pound.<sup>3</sup> The City accepted this as reasonable, but Nevile did not, bringing influence to bear to get it increased. The King was moved to write asking that a competent salary should be allowed to him out of the dues.<sup>4</sup> The source suggested robbed the City of most of its objections, but before anything had been settled, Nevile's next accounts had been audited. These showed that in three months arrears of over £5000 had accumulated. He promised security for them, and daily payments in the future, and to this the City agreed.<sup>5</sup> As he failed to keep his word, the Aldermen ordered a further inquiry,

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1666-67, p. 519; *Jor.*, 46, f. 142v.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1660-61, pp. 43, 158. He did not resign his comptrollership until the end of 1670.

<sup>3</sup> *Jor.*, 46, f. 301v. In the light of the experience gained, they recommended that the system should be stiffened in various ways. Nevile was to be bonded for £600 to pay in his receipts at least once a fortnight. His accounts were to be audited within 14 days of the end of each year, and, as an interim check on him, the clerk to the coal meters was to make direct to the chamberlain a weekly return of the coals cleared. The City accepted these suggestions but increased the bond to £1000 and made the payments weekly.

<sup>4</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1668-69, p. 259.

<sup>5</sup> *Jor.*, 47, f. 2. Nevile's statement of what he had done with the money seems worthy of recording, 'xv<sup>cl</sup> [£1500] thereof hee had paid to his Creditors, other xv<sup>cl</sup> [£1500] he had expended in building his house and the remainder hee had lent to his friends': (*Repert.*, 79, f. 206v). The lease of his house in St. Paul's Churchyard was part of the security which he offered. He was bonded on the very next day (*Repert.*, 75, f. 8v), the matter having apparently been left in abeyance since the previous report.

and Nevile countered by procuring the intervention of the Lord Keeper on his behalf.<sup>1</sup> The City, between fears of the difficulties which would arise about passing the accounts at the court of Exchequer and reluctance to make powerful enemies, was uncertain which way to turn. The Common Council left it to the Aldermen to make the best of the position, and in this instance their confidence was well deserved. With much shrewdness, they granted Nevile a retrospective salary of one shilling in the pound, provided that the King would authorize it, and set off the amount so far due against the arrears of duty. The balance was to be liquidated by an immediate payment of £1000, and by a reduction in the salary to £200 per annum, until the surplus had extinguished the arrears. In addition, since they could not rid themselves of him, they conciliated all his protectors by giving him a formal appointment for the term of the duty.<sup>2</sup>

This should have ended the trouble, but Nevile's payments were irregular and the City retaliated by stopping his salary. Nevile repeatedly petitioned the City and the Privy Council<sup>3</sup> for relief, but the City was as adept as any citizen at delaying such matters. In six years it paid less than two years' salary, and, when the Council grew pressing, had the effrontery first to reply that communications must be sent to the Common Council and not to the Aldermen,<sup>4</sup> and then to quote the Act against the King and their own agreement.<sup>5</sup> In the end after ten years' delay Nevile's son obtained a settlement. The City having collected all the arrears by deduction from the amount due, paid him the slender balance of £197 13s. 9d.<sup>6</sup>

In the course of this dispute, fresh troubles accumulated on all sides. Courtiers eager for pickings had attempted to secure the receivership of the two shilling duty, and had with

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 75, ff. 31v, 95v. Sir Orlando Bridgeman was then Lord Keeper.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 75, ff. 136v-8; *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1670, pp. 202-3.

<sup>3</sup> For instances, see *Repert.*, 77, f. 100; 99, f. 46; *P. C. Reg.*, 2/64, ff. 197, 216.

<sup>4</sup> *Repert.*, 79, f. 199v.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 233v.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 85, ff. 88v, 143v. Nevile died on March 3rd, 1676. His case may be found in *P.R.O.*, *S.P. Dom.*, Charles II, 363, No. 181.

difficulty been repelled.<sup>1</sup> The second Act, by allowing only ten shillings per hundred pounds to be deducted for the cost of collection,<sup>2</sup> had upset the whole basis of the agreement with Nevile, and had set the City toiling to prevent its own funds being drawn upon to meet the deficiency. Worse still, serious frauds were reported. By connivance between ship masters and coal meters wrong returns were being made and the collectors robbed of the duty.<sup>3</sup> Precautions were taken and the safeguards stiffened, but the trouble continued. The next committee of inquiry named two of the under coal meters as persons known to be implicated, adding 'and wee have just cause to beleieve that the undermeato<sup>rs</sup> being for the most part mercenary persons [are] many of them guilty of the like practices'.<sup>4</sup> They suggested further precautions, but the frauds went on. The meters' clerks delivered their certificates, not to the collectors as they should, but to others who altered them at will. Clearing certificates at the Custom House were given, in defiance of all regulations, before the duty had been charged and paid. Ship masters were allowed to have any meter they liked, instead of following the roster. In fact a trade with a century-old reputation for frauds was using all its skill and experience to evade a new and heavy impost. In the end, the trouble became so serious that the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, commissioners with the Lord Mayor for the Churches' half of the duty, agreed with the City to allow a group of men £500 a year for each year in which the duty exceeded £39,000, plus one-sixth of any excess there might be over £40,600.<sup>5</sup> This, it was

<sup>1</sup> The King's first recommendee, Colonel Atkins, had refused to accept on the terms laid down by the second Act, but he later recommended Richard Harrison, Esq., for the post. The efforts of Viscount Grandison to obtain it caused the most trouble: (see *Cal. Treas. Bks.*, 1672-75, pp. 190, 191, 199, 202, 435). Thomas Christopher, a former servant of Nevile's, had the receivership as an interim arrangement until a regular holder could be appointed. Having learnt wisdom the City bound him with two sureties in the sum of £2000, to pay in daily. This he did. <sup>2</sup> S. 35. <sup>3</sup> *Jor.*, 47, f. 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Repert.*, 77, ff. 16v-18. The coal meters, who were generally men of importance, exercised their offices through hired deputies.

<sup>5</sup> *Jor.*, 48, f. 235; *Repert.*, 80, f. 295v; *Repert.*, 81, ff. 238v, 341; *Repert.*, 82, f. 25v; *Guildhall Recs.*, Deeds 17. No. 4.



reported, much improved the yield,<sup>1</sup> but, in the 1680s new troubles arose. The City was then attacked for misemploying the moneys received, and had to answer at least one suit which was begun against it.<sup>2</sup> Finally the commissioners for St. Paul's, after harrying both the City and the collector, accused the two of collusion for the purpose of defrauding the cathedral and the churches of part of their share of the dues.<sup>3</sup>

Valuable though the dues had been, and reluctant though the City was to lose them, such attacks must have vested their end with a certain relief. The mere passage of time was making it more and more difficult to answer accusations. By 1687, five successive chamberlains<sup>4</sup> had dealt with the dues, and, of the Aldermen who had seen their start, only Sir William Hooker remained in office. Continuity was going and, so far as the City was concerned, the *raison d'être* of the dues had disappeared. When the collector's man had left the chamber for the last time, and the weary clerk had checked his final total, both walked home through streets from which all traces of the Fire had been obliterated. The vast unfinished bulk of St. Paul's and building operations at an occasional church were all that remained to remind them of its existence. The secular work of the dues had been completed: the receipts from their continuation could be left to the Churches.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 89, f. 115v. But see B.M., Harl. M.S., 4941, f. 90, and Lambeth Library, MS. 670, printed in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, xvii, p. 119. In spite of the latter there can be no question that frauds were perpetrated.

<sup>2</sup> *Repert.*, 87, ff. 196, 257v; *ibid.*, 88, ff. 5v, 13, 66; *Guildhall Recs.*, shelf 505, misc. papers relating to the coal dues.

<sup>3</sup> *Repert.*, 93, ff. 45v, 94, 108, 159, 185v; *ibid.*, 96, ff. 209, 345; *Guildhall Recs.*, Medium suits box i, No. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Thomas Player senior, Sir Thomas Player junior, Peter Aylworth, Esq., Sir Peter Rich and Henry Loades, Esq.

<sup>5</sup> By 1 James II, c. 15, their proportion of the old duty was continued until Michaelmas 1700, but only one-fifth of it was allocatable to the parish churches, St. Paul's securing the balance. 8 & 9 William and Mary, c. 10, provided that a duty of one shilling should continue until Michaelmas 1716. One-sixth of the nett proceeds was available for St. Peter's, Westminster, and a part, during the first four years, for St. Thomas's, Southwark. The remainder went to St. Paul's. 1 Anne, stat. 2, c. 12, levied an additional two shillings from May 15th, 1708, to May 15th, 1716. The whole of this was appropriated to St. Paul's.



FLEET CANAL AND THAMES  
QUAY

THE Rebuilding Acts included two projects — the Fleet Canal and the Thames Quay — which require treatment in some detail. Interesting in themselves, they are also positive proof that those in charge of the rebuilding did not lack the vision or the will to improve the city. Each found a place in the plans of Evelyn<sup>1</sup> and of Wren<sup>2</sup>, each had the support of the King and of the City,<sup>3</sup> and each presented the authorities with difficulties which required their fullest attention. With many apparent points in common, they actually differed profoundly in genesis and in execution. Whereas the first was almost entirely utilitarian, the second was designed, in part,

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn desired that the valley below St. Paul's might be abated to form a graceful ascent to the cathedral and that the channel from thence to Holborn should be 'so enlarged as not only to be preserv'd sweet (by scowring it through floodgates into the Thames . . .) but commodious for the intercourse of considerable vessels . . . and which therefore should be . . . wharffed on both sides to the very key of the river': (*Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 94, p. 69).

<sup>2</sup> Wren's position in 1666 has already been discussed. In this chapter, he often appears as a dominant figure, but, in spite of his real eminence during these years, he must not be regarded as occupying the pinnacle of solitary greatness which subsequent generations have allotted to him. Hooke's diary shows that he met Hooke as a friend and dined with him as an equal. At the Royal Society he probably deferred to him as a superior in general learning, and, when the two conferred on the problems of Fleet ditch, it was a conference of equals so far as skill and ingenuity were concerned. Wren was certainly paying Hooke to help him with his work on the parish churches, but this was a shrewd move on his part, not patronage or charity. If Wren was busy, so also was Hooke, and, though the works of the latter, being secular, have mostly been destroyed, their mere existence shows how great was his reputation amongst his contemporaries. When thinking of the two men, so far as this chapter is concerned, a just balance may be achieved by remembering two entries in Hooke's diary for 1676. The first shows him celebrating with Wren the latter's birthday, and the second may be given in his own words: 'Sent Sir Ch. Wren's son a hobby horse': (*Diary*, op. cit., p. 254).

<sup>3</sup> A letter in the Le Fleming MSS. refers to the citizens as being 'unanimously resolved to make a fair quay all along the river from the Tower to the Temple': (Historical Manuscripts Commission, twelfth report, parts 7 and 8, p. 42).

to give London a river frontage which would rival that of admired continental cities.<sup>1</sup> Both were expensive and both ultimately ended in failure, yet, for boldness of conception London history has few examples to compare with either of them. They may be hidden from the eyes of the modern visitor, and therefore find no place in the itineraries of the guides, but they deserve to be preserved in the memories of all those who use or love the city.

The proposed Fleet Canal was partly a brave improvement and partly an attempt to convert a grave nuisance into the benefit it had once been. In former times the Fleet river had been navigable up to Holborn Bridge, but as the years passed it had gradually deteriorated into a shallow and evil-smelling sewer. Navigation had ceased and, in the middle of the seventeenth century, a not overparticular age, its condition had been described as 'very stinking and noisome'. Silt from the upper reaches, and mud and refuse from the growing streets in its valley had slowly choked it, with the result that, despite occasional cleanings,<sup>2</sup> its condition more or less regularly troubled the minds of those in authority. During the reign of James I various projects had been put forward for clearing out accumulations down to the true floor of the channel, embanking its sides with brick, stone or timber, and then flushing it out at intervals from a reservoir constructed above Clerkenwell.<sup>3</sup> The most detailed had envisaged grates on the upper waters to intercept debris and silt, a warden to remove carrion and bulky matter when the tide was out, and a vast grate at Bridewell to stop the Thames

<sup>1</sup> It was also intended to lessen the risk from fire, by allowing free access from the river to any street near it. This idea, and that of the frontage, are both contained in the royal proclamation of September 13th, 1666.

<sup>2</sup> J. Stow, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* . . . , ed. J. Strype (1720), bk. I, pp. 12, 23b, describes cleansings in 1502 and 1606. After the former, boats could again be rowed up to Holborn Bridge 'which was a great Commodity to all the Inhabitants in that part of the City'. By the time of the Fire it had again almost completely filled up. It had then lost its title of river, and was commonly referred to as a ditch: (ibid., bk. III, p. 279b).

<sup>3</sup> Somewhat similar proposals were made for flushing the King's ditch at Cambridge (W. D. Bushell, *Hobson's Conduit* (Cambridge, 1938) ).

bringing up filth on the rising tide.<sup>1</sup> Little seems to have come of them, and as the years passed an expanding population had added to the difficulties. The Commissioners of Sewers, at a court held in February 1653, clearly set out the evils which had arisen from this last cause. The river, they declared, from Hockley in the Hole to the Thames, was 'by many encroachments thereupon made by keeping of Hogs and Swine therein and elsewhere neer to it, the throwing in of Offals and Garbage . . . and by reason of many houses of office erected built and standing upon and over [it] and otherwise not only stopped . . . and become unpassable with boats . . . but also became [a] very . . . great prejudice . . . not only to the neighbourhood . . . but to the City of *London* and County of *Middlesex*.<sup>2</sup>

This valley, where the crowded poor bred plagues, and divided authority clogged the wheels of reform, was something that the planners of 1666 could not possibly overlook. Their scheme, if successful, would both have eliminated the troubles within the area of the city, and have made a valuable addition to the wharves and storage accommodation of the port. A dangerous nuisance would have been disposed of, much-needed facilities provided, and the street serving the older wharves relieved of their over-great burden of traffic. Embryonic in the first Act,<sup>3</sup> it blossomed in the second.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Strype's *Stow*, bk. I, pp. 12, 23b. B.M., Cotton MS., Titus B.v. ff. 262 *et seq.*, 330 *et seq.*; Vespasian c. xiv. f. 344 *et seq.* The grate at Bridewell was to be equipped with gates to allow lighters to pass through.

<sup>2</sup> B.M., Proclamations 21 h 5 (12).

<sup>3</sup> S. 33 provided that no building except cranes 'for present use' should be built within seventy feet of the middle of Bridewell Dock, Fleet Ditch, and Turnmill Brook from the Thames to Clerkenwell. Nothing was said about canalization, or about deepening the stream. This prohibition expired on March 24th, 1669, and the second Act omitted the section above Holborn Bridge. This was almost entirely outside the City's jurisdiction and therefore required separate treatment. The authorities concerned reported on the possibility of making it navigable, but pointed out that the cost would be prohibitive. They favoured high walls to preserve the stream from garbage, and the construction of a road alongside it to carry traffic. Probably neither proposal was carried out.

<sup>4</sup> Ss. 41-3. These imposed a minimum breadth for the combined wharves and channel of one hundred feet, but allowed them to be made twenty feet broader. The minimum was chosen.

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In all its fullness, it provided for a canalized river, forty feet wide, navigable as far as Holborn Bridge, roughly three-sevenths of a mile from its mouth, and flanked by thirty-foot wharves,<sup>1</sup> with underground store-houses beneath them. Along each wharf, and fronting on to it, there was to be a uniform line of houses of the second sort. The completed scheme would therefore also enrich the city with a levelled and carefully planned area resembling in all but the sharp slope of its sides a section of the clean and orderly canal-side streets of a Dutch town. It was a daring conception, if formidable in its difficulties.

Preliminary designs for the canal had been produced during the debates on the second Act.<sup>2</sup> Its passage into law not only allowed work to begin, but laid on the City as a statutory obligation the production of a complete ground plan for the King's approval and the actual staking of it before the end of the month.<sup>3</sup> This was done. The lines of the channel and the wharves were set out in the presence of the royal surveyors on April 23rd.<sup>4</sup> On the 26th the Aldermen approved and sent to Charles for his approbation the plan drawn of it.<sup>5</sup> Three days later Mills noted that the levels were taken<sup>6</sup> and, Charles having given his consent to the design, the scheme was fairly launched. Such progress was too rapid

<sup>1</sup> Strype's *Stow*, bk. III, p. 280a, says thirty-five feet. As this conflicts with the surveyors' report of their staking, and many references to a width of thirty feet, it appears to be a slip on his part: (see *Repert.*, 75, f. 168; *C.L.O.*, ff. 32v., 57v, 58v, 60v; *C.L.C. Journal*, 1672-74, p. 25).

<sup>2</sup> On March 10th, 1670, the Aldermen considered a plan drawn on the previous evening, in conference with Wren and others, in conformity with the King's wishes concerning the Fleet and the Thames Quay. By a majority decision they agreed to present it as it stood to the committee of Parliament which was dealing with the second Act: (*Repert.*, 75, f. 121).

<sup>3</sup> It also imposed the quite impossible obligation of having the wharves levelled before August 1st, 1670.

<sup>4</sup> *Repert.*, 75, f. 163v.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 168.

<sup>6</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 84, II, f. 145. The entry gives a valuable picture of the drop along the channel. 'The mud is below the level line at Blackfryers corner 21'3", Bride-well bridge 17', Fleetbridge 13', Church Yard [St. Bride's] 10', Turnagain Lane bridge 9', Holborn bridge 8'. St. Bride's churchyard was some distance from the church, lying almost opposite to the junction of Fleet Lane and the Fleet river.

to last, and delay inevitably followed whilst funds were accumulated and the necessary land acquired.<sup>1</sup> The City was reluctant to begin more new works without the money to finance them, and the accumulation of the part of the coal duty allotted for the canal was bound to take time. The land problem was more difficult. The second Act laid down<sup>2</sup> that the area to be converted into wharves was to lie open, without divisions or fences, but that, subject to this restriction, it need not be bought from the proprietors. The latter could, as in the case of the Thames Quay, be left in possession, their land being delimited by denter stones set in the pavement. In this case they were to receive compensation if they suffered from the change, and to pay melioration if they benefited. However, contrary to the provisions for the Thames Quay which made no specific mention of purchase, it was also provided that land could be acquired for the wharves and compensation paid out of the fund earmarked for the canal, after the costs of construction had been covered. The City had therefore to decide what course to adopt, before negotiating with those concerned. This decision was difficult. Purchase was simpler, since assessing damage involved a delay of several years and the probability of litigation, but it was bound to be more expensive. On the other hand, it gave greater control and, if the canal proved a success, the dues payable for the use of its wharves might become a valuable asset. For some months the question hung fire whilst City and owners considered their position. Then the City Lands Committee 'agreed that the proprietors of ground upon Fleet-ditch shall forthwith receive satisfaction for their damage upon the Certificate of the Surveyor'<sup>3</sup> — an interim decision which assured claimants that something would be done and yet did not commit the City too far. This was followed in four months by a step towards purchase. It was decided that those

<sup>1</sup> The last order on the coal dues for compensation for it was not cashed until February 6th, 1684.

<sup>2</sup> Ss. 41-3.

<sup>3</sup> *C.L.O.*, f. 47v. November 30th, 1670.



who wished to part with their whole interest should be offered fifteen years' purchase of one-third of the rack rent or improved value of the tenements standing on their ground before the Fire.<sup>1</sup> For large pieces of ground this was a fairer method than the five shillings per foot super which was the standard price for the snippets taken from frontages and laid into the streets, but it had its difficulties. The exact pre-Fire value was not always easy to establish, and where all the documents had perished there was a great temptation for claimants to exaggerate. However, this drawback was accepted and the rate was at once offered to a number of those applying for compensation, the comptroller having instructions to examine carefully the evidence put forward in support of the values they claimed.<sup>2</sup> In May 1671, a year after the inception of the canal project, purchases began on this basis, and in September, after long debate, it was decided that the method was satisfactory, and should be continued.<sup>3</sup> One difficulty was thus solved.

In the meantime, the City had been negotiating with contractors for the actual carrying out of the work,<sup>4</sup> and with Wren for its design. The ground plan had been approved by the King at the outset, but it was also necessary to obtain his agreement to the methods of wharfing, and indeed, to all the details of constructing the canal. This was much more complicated than the plan, and involved long discussions with Wren, who, as Surveyor General of the Royal Works, was the official concerned. Hooke, his nearest counterpart in the City's service, acted for the latter. These two were the experts to whom all matters were referred. Normally they seem to

<sup>1</sup> *C.L.O.*, f. 51. March 15th, 1671.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 51v.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 65. £10,000 had then been received on the canal account, and the City felt more free to act.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Burton and Robert Weddall, Fishmongers, were appointed on November 25th, 1670, to manage and prepare the whole work. They were ordered to supervise the carrying out of the proposals put forward and accepted on March 22nd, 1671, and they were paid various sums out of the coal dues for so doing. They were also concerned with the preparation of the new markets, and very soon severed their connection with the canal, presumably by reason of their appointment as collectors of the market dues.

have worked out schemes together, but where a plan originated with someone else, it had still to be referred to them for approval before it was adopted. With men so busy, acting for principals who were equally preoccupied, progress was bound to be slow, and it was not until November 1670,<sup>1</sup> when the direction of the canal scheme was handed over to the City Lands Committee, that active steps were taken to forward it. Hooke was then ordered to discuss matters with Wren and to obtain his written proposals about the construction of canal and wharves.<sup>2</sup> Even so, three months later it had still not been decided whether the wharfing should be made of timber, brick or stone.<sup>3</sup> However, with the spring, matters moved faster. Proposals put forward by some unspecified person on March 15th were referred to Wren and Hooke, and on the 22nd they produced a detailed scheme for the consideration of the City Lands Committee.<sup>4</sup> This provided for wharfing of timber set on a narrow and totally inadequate brick mudsill, and suggested that either a trial section of one hundred feet should be done in order to afford an example for the specification required for the contract, or else that a scale model of such a section should be constructed to serve the same purpose. The City, wisely cautious, set four separate contractors to do one hundred feet each, and also instructed Hooke to make a model. From the four, two in partnership were chosen, and, after some preliminary clearing, August saw Thomas Fitch and John Ball, carpenters, fairly launched as contractors for the whole scheme.<sup>5</sup> Even so, this did not mean the beginning of a period of comfortable progress. The wharfing devised by Hooke and Wren was far too weak, and they had seriously underestimated the difficulties and the problems involved. The provisions of the contract had again and again to be altered, and, although the intentions of the

<sup>1</sup> *Jor.*, 47, f. 74v.

<sup>2</sup> *C.L.O.*, f. 47v, November 25th, 1670.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 51, March 1st, 1671.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 54-54v.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 61v.





Sir Christopher Wren  
as painted by Kneller  
National Portrait Gallery



projectors were finally carried out, it was only as the result of frequent extensions to the scope of the work, and at a cost far greater than that originally expected.

The obstacles which were overcome were many and varied. Some were human, some natural, and others a combination of the two. The projectors had envisaged a navigable cut, flanked by wharves, and crossed by bridges arched high enough to allow lighters to pass under them. Theoretically the difficulties should not have been great. The process of straightening the course of the river and of levelling the banks for the wharves alongside it entailed the moving of many cubic yards of earth, but this was powerfully assisted by the stream itself, which afforded easy transport from one part of the work to another. Deepening the channel and facing its sides, which should have been the most difficult part of the contract, were also helped by the water. The extent to which the stream dried out at low tide made it possible to do much of this work in very favourable conditions. Wharfing along the Thames provided examples and experience, and there was nothing intrinsically difficult about the process of excavating. Unfortunately the surveyors seriously under-rated the consequences of drainage. The canal lay at the bottom of a valley which in 1670 was far deeper than it is in 1940, and which even to-day is marked by a steepish drop on each side. Water from a wide area seeped down into it and the sides of the newly cut channel were constantly broken in by springs. Some work had therefore to be done several times over, and the difficulty was not finally overcome until the specification for the walling had been drastically revised to meet it. The effects of drainage from the streets forced another revision. Water accumulated on the wharves, bringing down with it quantities of earth and rubbish to add to those illicitly dumped there by the inhabitants. Much of this refuse was carried on into the channel, from whence it had laboriously to be removed. Hence drains and grates had to be installed in a number of new places, and even so a heavy storm was certain to produce an overflow, with

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damage in proportion to its strength. Yet these two difficulties were manageable, for both were within the bounds of the city. A third was made far more serious because its origin lay outside the City's jurisdiction. The headwaters of the Fleet, known as Turnmill Brook, were in Middlesex, under the inadequate control of a board of commissioners of sewers. Theoretically those waters should have flowed down clean and sweet between banks high enough to contain them. In practice every flood saw them pouring into the lower reaches laden with mud and refuse. This, plus the garbage thrown into the stream by the people living along its banks, was deposited below Holborn Bridge, to the great detriment of the channel.

The City went to considerable trouble to meet this last difficulty. The brook above Holborn Bridge was cleansed and arched over as far as the city boundary and, in order to stop as much of the silt and rubbish as possible, gratings fifteen feet high were placed across its mouth.<sup>1</sup> The method was good but the work in the first instance was insufficiently done.<sup>2</sup> In December 1672 mud and filth 'much increased by the constant injection of the inhabitants thereabouts of great quantities of filthy garbage from Slaughter-houses and such like places . . . with the violent urgings of the very great and rapid torrent occasioned by the late rain' put such pressure on the stop grates that it breached the brick work, bore down the grates and thirty feet of the arching behind them, and poured on into the Fleet.<sup>3</sup> The breach was repaired and the silt removed, the latter costing over £950, but the trouble was not solved. The grates were again choked by 'vast quantities of

<sup>1</sup> This was recommended by a committee which reported on May 29th, 1671. Orders were given for it to be carried out at rates to be agreed by Wren, Hooke and Oliver. The cost, including nearly £400 for the grates, was heavy – some £2250: (*C.L.P.*, 1671; *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, f. 15; and the *Coal Duty Account Books*).

<sup>2</sup> Eight from the Masters and Wardens of the Carpenters, Bricklayers, Masons and Blacksmiths, reported after the first breach that the cause was the 'insufficiency and unworkmanlike performance of the Bricklayers work'; (*C.L.P.*, 1672, report dated December 23rd, 1672). In fairness to John Fitch, the man responsible, it should be added that neglect to cleanse the grates had thrown an unwarranted and unforeseen strain upon it. The City probably took this view for it continued to employ him.

<sup>3</sup> *C.L.P.*, 1672, report dated December 14th, 1672.

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Offall and other filth' thrown into the brook by the inhabitants of Middlesex, and the City failed to have it cleared out. In consequence, on January 1st, 1674, the authorities were summoned by urgent messengers to view a fresh breach. Dammed by the accumulated refuse the brook had risen until it flowed in a cataract over the top of the grates. Descending on the other side, the waters had undermined the foundations of the brick arching. Twenty feet had fallen in, and the torrent was pouring over the top carrying huge quantities of silt down into the Fleet.<sup>1</sup> Hooke and Oliver, by no means alarmists, reported that the floor of the latter had been covered to a depth of three feet all the way down to Fleet Bridge, and that approximately 4700 cubic yards would have to be dredged out to restore it to its former state.<sup>2</sup> This was done. Repairs were carried out and the silt removed, the combined cost reaching £1200, but the evil could not be properly dealt with without the co-operation of the commissioners of sewers. The latter were willing to help, but, as they asked for a contribution of over £10,000, for the cost as they estimated it, the City was not prepared to move.<sup>3</sup> The grates were not perfect but, if cleansed, they kept the inflow of silt down to manageable proportions, and at that the matter seems to have been left.<sup>4</sup>

The rubbish and silt brought in from outside the city's boundary were augmented by the negligence and misdoings of the citizens. Mud from the initial cleansing above the bridge was so placed that the rain washed it back into the channel,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *C.L.P.*, 1674, report dated January 12th, 1674.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, report dated April 18th, 1674. Some of this would have been brought down after the first flood, as the surveyors were giving the measurement at the time of their report. Another estimate given on May 8th declared that they had understated the quantity and that it should be more like 6500 cubic yards, but the payments for clearing it out suggest that the surveyors were accurate.

<sup>3</sup> *Repert.*, 79, f. 99v.

<sup>4</sup> A recommendation was made that a cess-pool should be dug to protect the grates. This was in accordance with the usual method of the period and instructions were given on several occasions for it to be made, but it is not clear whether they were carried out: (*C.L.P.*, 1672, report dated February 5th, 1673; *C.L.C. Journal*, 1672-74, p. 69).

<sup>5</sup> *C.L.P.*, 1672, report dated February 5th, 1673.

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where it was increased by large quantities from the wharves. Despite all orders to the contrary, builders and inhabitants were solving the ever-difficult problem of the disposal of refuse by dumping it on the invitingly bare expanse each side of the new canal. From there it was washed or fell into the channel, or, failing that, was left to Fitch to clear away. More was dumped close to the grates and channels which conveyed surface water from the streets to the canal, with the result that it was either conveyed down them into the canal, or else, choking them, carried there direct.<sup>1</sup> In the aggregate this cost Fitch, as he told the City with some emphasis, hundreds of pounds to dig out again. Partial relief was obtained by the appointment of a whole time warden,<sup>2</sup> but the trouble could not be wholly stopped. On July 31st, 1674, Oliver reported that from all sources 'The mud brought downe by the last Rains is in Depth about a foote for 700 foote in length'.<sup>3</sup> Two years later it was worse. The keeper of the channel then estimated that it averaged two feet in depth along the whole channel from Holborn Bridge to the Thames. On a seven or a nine years' contract, he reported, the cost of clearing this and keeping it cleared would amount to £120 per annum.<sup>4</sup> The disgust of the City can be imagined!

At the mouth of the channel there were also difficulties. It was soon found that, in order to carry out the scheme as planned, a mud-bank at the outflow into the Thames would have to be cleared away, and the master of the ballast office had therefore to be called in to do the work.<sup>5</sup> Trouble was also caused by barges and lighters which insisted on putting into

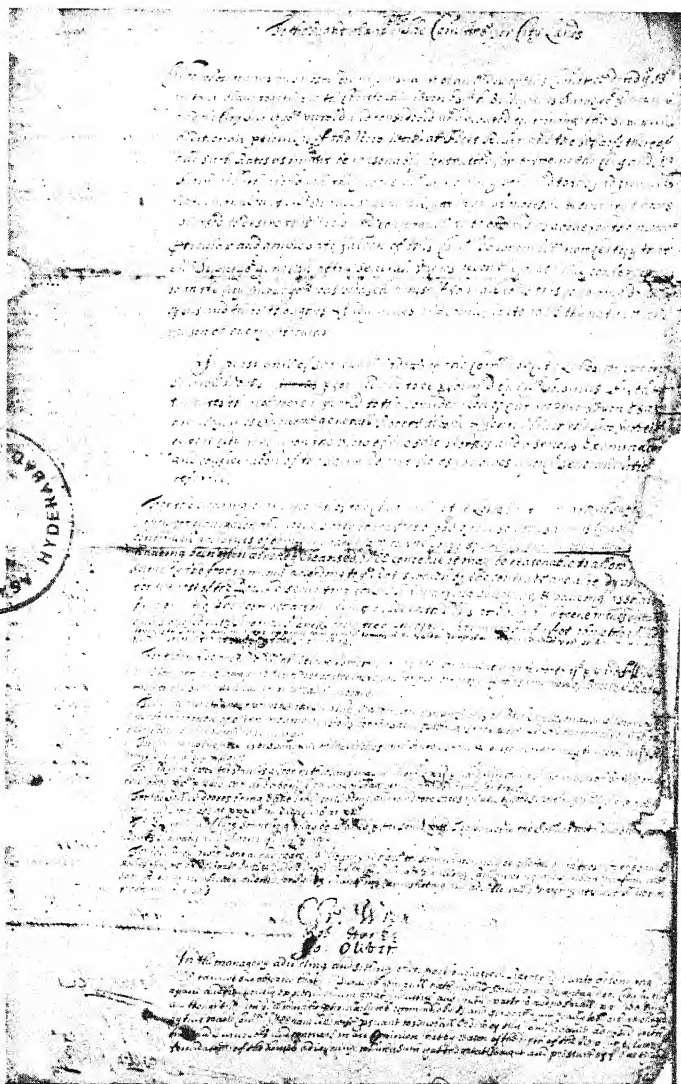
<sup>1</sup> *C.L.P.*, and *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> On the recommendation of a committee which reported on February 5th, 1673, the City appointed William Boulter, gentleman, Thomas Fitch's head man, to supervise the channel. Later on he was made receiver of the tolls and the wharfage and craneage dues there.

<sup>3</sup> *C.L.P.*, 1674, report dated July 31st, 1674.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1676, report dated August 11th, 1676.

<sup>5</sup> On August 14th, 1671, he received the King's instructions to cease the work on which he was engaged and to employ as many hands as he could, under the direction of Wren, to remove the shoal in the channel and mouth of Bridewell Dock: (*Cal. S. P. Dom.*, 1671, p. 430).



From the Corporation of London's records

the channel, to the great hindrance of the work which was going on. Wren had to be asked to obtain an order from the King prohibiting them from so doing, but even so the trouble continued until Fitch placed a boom across the entrance.<sup>1</sup> The city wall, which flanked part of the east bank of the channel, was another source of difficulty. In some places it had to be taken down and rebuilt, and in others underpinning was necessary.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless the work continued. As each trouble arose measures were found to cope with it. Authority kept the ill-doings of the inhabitants within manageable limits, and experience taught City and contractor how to circumvent the difficulties of nature. Though the first contract had to be terminated because John Ball was found to be using timber which was very far from answering to the specification,<sup>3</sup> Thomas Fitch,<sup>4</sup> his fellow-contractor, proved to be a man of the utmost integrity, and his skill carried the work to its completion.

A full specification of the work is not available, but enough details remain to give some conception of the methods and materials used. The general outline is clear — the forty-foot channel, cleansed and navigable, with its wharves thirty feet broad on each side — but many of the details of the construction are lost with the contracts which contained them.<sup>5</sup> References show that Fitch, in his first sole contract, had agreed to undertake the whole task of cutting the channel and making the wharves. The actual excavation was to be

<sup>1</sup> *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, ff. 4, 16v.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*; *Repert.*, 77, f. 124v; *Guildhall Recs.*, small MS. box 33, No. 30. It was also reported that the channel was being made 44 feet wide and the wharves on each side 26. Fitch was paid £500 for the damage he had sustained through the insufficiency of Ball's work.

<sup>4</sup> Strype's *Stow*, bk. I, p. 12b, refers to him as a bricklayer. The records clearly show that he was of the Carpenters' Company.

<sup>5</sup> The only contract which I have been able to trace is Fitch's second independent one, made on the 12th, and signed on June 20th, 1672: (*Guildhall Recs.*, Deeds, 37. 16). The rest of this account has been compiled from copious but involved references in the papers, journals and orders of the City Lands Committee. In case anyone cares to go into the matter in greater detail than is possible here, I have inserted references to the chief documents.

done at a flat rate of two shillings per cubic yard of earth, wet or dry, which was dug and carried away. Arrangements for the wharfing varied, as it was itself to vary in different parts of the channel. Where the pressure was greatest, for fifty feet on each side of Fleet Bridge and fifty feet on the south side of Holborn Bridge, the facing was to be done with well-burnt brick four and a half feet thick at the foundation, tapering upwards as the City might think fit. The remainder was to be timbered. This first arrangement did not last long. Less than a month's work showed that it was insufficient, and an amended contract was concluded whereby the brick facing was extended from fifty to two hundred feet in each case, and the timbering proportionately reduced. The materials were altered to best stock bricks with well-wrought tarras at least four inches thick, and the foundations were also strengthened. The whole wall was to be set on piles close driven within a frame and then well wedged. The frame and piles were then given the extra protection of a covering of good planks securely pinned down on to them. In themselves the methods contained nothing particularly novel, the interest is rather in the care taken to emphasize that the materials and the workmanship should be really good. There were no peculiar difficulties to be solved — no problem so acute as the tidal scour which was then troubling the minds of the engineers at London Bridge — it was rather a question of providing a work strong enough to withstand the pressure to which it would be subjected. It was this which occasioned a clause stipulating that the piling and planking should have a minimum breadth of seven feet where the wall of the wharf was between twenty and thirty feet high,<sup>1</sup> and that the base of the wall should also be seven feet. The wall was sharply angled at the bottom, being marked back one foot in four, and then built 'scarping without' to two feet below high water mark, where the breadth was four feet. From that point it ran almost perpendicularly to the campshot. This last was to be fixed

<sup>1</sup> It was allowed to narrow in proportion as the height of the wall diminished.



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with land ties and iron, the specification requiring that the former should be of good 'spird' oak,<sup>1</sup> a typical instance of the care taken to ensure the use of good materials.

In addition to the cutting and wharfing, Fitch contracted to make the storehouses which were to be hollowed out beneath the inclines connecting the wharf level with the passage over Holborn and Fleet Bridges.<sup>2</sup> These inclines were to be vaulted for 120 feet from the sides of the bridges, the roadway being supported on arches two bricks thick, springing from party walls one brick thicker. For additional strength the sides of the storehouses from two feet below high water mark were to be planked with three-inch timber, anchored with iron cramps. Over the tops of the arches lay one foot of well-rammed loam, covered with paving gravel, topped with a substantial paving of sea pebbles.

Even the revisions contained in this contract proved insufficient. As the work progressed, those in charge realized that they had still seriously underestimated the pressure on the wharfing caused by the great depth of the cut and by the 'quicknes of the springs thereabouts'. The extent of the brickwork had to be increased after each inspection, until timber was completely ousted from the wharfing. The piling became ten feet thick, the wall nine feet four inches at its base, six and a half feet at ten feet and so on in proportion up to the top. The elbow on the east side of the channel below Fleet Bridge had to be strengthened with a cross wall. The roofing of the vaults was reinforced with rubble or brick, and, to support the foundations of the houses lining the wharves, more vaults were built where the levels permitted. Reports in September and November of 1672<sup>3</sup> testify to the anxious care with which the whole work was watched, and the manner in which the City accepted the experts' recommendations to its determination to spare nothing which would help it to success. Finally,

<sup>1</sup> Presumably 'secured with stays'.

<sup>2</sup> The bridges at Fleet Lane and at Bridewell were for foot passengers, and were approached only by a series of steps.

<sup>3</sup> *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, ff. 31v-32v, 35-36, 43v-46.



this process of trial and error seems to have been successful, so far as the wharfing was concerned. A committee which inspected the whole project in 1675, a year after its completion, found nothing to complain of in that respect, though it raised the old questions of water accumulating on the wharves on account of insufficient drainage, and the dumping of refuse in spite of regulations and the keeper of the channel.<sup>1</sup>

Much of this ultimate success seems to have been due to Thomas Fitch, the contractor in charge.<sup>2</sup> The holder of a number of other City contracts, this was by far the greatest work that he carried out during the rebuilding, and it must have caused him more anxiety than all the others put together.<sup>3</sup> During its course he had to face every imaginable difficulty, temporary or permanent. Throughout he was hampered by the mud and refuse coming down from Turnmill Brook and the streets round the channel. Piles of rubbish, wood and building materials, illicitly left on the wharves he was levelling were almost as great a hindrance. In the early stages, the land he was supposed to be working upon was often unpurchased; in the later the materials he had prepared were rendered useless by alterations in his contract. Unsuspected springs caused the sides of the cuts to cave in, forcing him to do the work again, and the depth to which it was finally necessary to take the foundations meant that the sections of it could not be completed in less than six double tides. Warfare and weather both affected progress. Heavy storms caused floods in Turnmill Brook, and war with the Dutch brought the ravages of

<sup>1</sup> *C.L.P.*, 1675, report dated November 10th, 1675.

<sup>2</sup> Others who worked on the scheme as a whole included John Fitch, bricklayer, Thomas Cartwright, mason, Thomas Hodgkins, blacksmith, John Eden, painter, Thomas Billing, smith, and John Young, mason. John Fitch, Hodgkins and Billing were concerned only with Turnmill Brook; Cartwright with the bridges at Bridewell and Holborn, Young with Holborn Bridge, and Eden with painting the posts and rails on each side of the channel. Strictly speaking the bridges were separate from the work on the canal, associated only with it by reason of their position. Fleet Bridge was paid for out of the City's cash, and was finished before Fitch's contract began.

<sup>3</sup> He worked (*inter alia*) on the stairs at Blackfriars and Three Cranes, the laystalls at Dowgate and Puddle Dock, and wharfing at Whitefriars. Hooke's diary shows that he also worked on a number of important buildings.

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press-gangs.<sup>1</sup> So many men were taken from the workings that operations were seriously handicapped, whilst each flood from Turnmill Brook caused its own set of troubles. That of January 1674, for example, brought down such a volume of mud that the lighters could not be taken far enough up the channel to do the ordinary clearing and wharfing, and it was necessary to carry the earth 'in baskets upon mens shoulders for above three hundred foot to be lodged upon that part of the wharfe from whence it [might] with convenience be thrown into Lighters'.<sup>2</sup> Finally, and perhaps most important of all, Fitch was often 'straitened' for want of money.

In spite of all this he seems to have worked calmly and successfully. Drawing £500 a week on account,<sup>3</sup> he kept two hundred men fully employed on the site,<sup>4</sup> meeting difficulties when they occurred as though they were a regular part of the job. Constantly inspected, his work was always reported as good. It was also rapid. Beginning on his own in May 1672 he had overcome all troubles and completed the task before the end of October 1674.<sup>5</sup> On the 19th of that month the measurement was finished,<sup>6</sup> the final account drawn, and the committee sitting to give it formal confirmation. The figure of £51,307 6s. 2d. was then accepted, the contract delivered up and the acquittance given.<sup>7</sup> To mark its signal appreciation of work well done, the City accompanied the acquittance with

<sup>1</sup> *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, f. 69; *C.L.C. Journal*, 1672-74, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *C.L.P.*, 1674, report dated February 10th, 1674.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1672, reports dated June 6th, 1672, and February 5th, 1673, and *Coal Duty Account Books*, *passim*. He was on many occasions paid interest on warrants for the period between the date at which they were due to be paid and the date on which they were cashed, the delay being caused by lack of funds in the chamber. On one warrant for £2000 the interest came to £57 13s. 4d.

<sup>4</sup> Besides others in the country: Hooke and Oliver reported on January 3rd, 1673, that he had 'three hundred foot and more of Wharfing Ready framed in the Country': (*C.L.P.*, 1672).

<sup>5</sup> *C.L.C. Journal*, 1672-74, pp. 71, 76, 78.

<sup>6</sup> The amount to be done is shown by the committee's order. Hooke, Oliver, Leybourne, Shortgrave and the City's bricklayer and carpenter were instructed to do it, and every member of the committee was asked to help whenever he could. The last four of the technicians received £15 apiece for their work, which took thirty days.

<sup>7</sup> *C.L.C. Journal*, 1672-74, p. 78. As the total spent on works for the Fleet scheme was less than £5000 more, the importance of Fitch's share can easily be realized.

a present of plate. The £200 spent on this was generous measure, amply earned. A knighthood, discussed at the time, was to follow later.

Apart from everything else, however, the Fleet scheme is of unique interest as a part of the general secular rebuilding programme which can indisputably be attributed to Wren. There is no evidence among the City's records, and I have found none outside them, to suggest that he had anything to do with designing the City's own buildings,<sup>1</sup> but the Fleet, for which the second Act laid down that the King's approval was required, seems to have been evolved under his direction throughout.<sup>2</sup> The draft produced before the passage of the Act was devised in consultation with him.<sup>3</sup> The actual staking was done in his presence,<sup>4</sup> and it was to him that the City turned to make or to sanction changes in work and design. This control on his part went beyond matters of planning and lay-out. He was actively and continuously concerned with technicalities of construction and details of charges.<sup>5</sup> Doubtless he was influenced, and perhaps guided, by Hooke and Oliver, men whose experience and ability were comparable with his own.<sup>6</sup> Their signatures appear on decisive reports,

<sup>1</sup> He was regularly consulted about the waterline, and the Monument and Temple Bar have been ascribed to him. Failing conclusive evidence in respect of the last two, it would seem better to suspend judgment about them. Wren was certainly asked about the emblem for the summit of the Monument, but, if he designed the whole pillar, it is extraordinary that there is no mention of this in the entry recording its approval by the court of Aldermen (*Repert.*, 76, f. 72v), and still more extraordinary that he received no gift for his work. John Aubrey in his *Brief Lives* declares categorically that Hooke built it, but Miss Batten (op. cit., p. 83) prefers to leave the question undecided.

<sup>2</sup> The idea, of course, was not his. It was a generally advocated reform, of which he was one of the supporters.

<sup>3</sup> *Repert.*, 75, f. 227.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 275v.

<sup>5</sup> The Journals and Orders of the City Lands Committee bear repeated witness to this and to the fact that the City looked to him both to suggest and to sanction changes. For examples, see *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, ff. 14, 32v, 47v, 60, and *Journal*, 1672-74, pp. 15, 20, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Hooke's *Diary*, op. cit., is disappointing. It begins too late for the report of May 1672, and its curt jottings, though they show that he was actively concerned in the work of supervision, give no indication of how much he contributed towards the planning of the scheme. The only entries which can be construed as bearing upon the latter are those of October 1st and of November 2nd, 1673, and they are too slight to build anything upon.

they were constantly associated with the work, and they were regularly paid by the City for their services on this score.<sup>1</sup> But, without in any way belittling their contribution to its conception and progress, it is plain that Wren was the directing authority. His report caused the revision of Fitch's initial contract, and, though the second contract states that the changes had been introduced 'by and with the advice and direction of Christopher Wren Esq<sup>re</sup> his Ma<sup>ties</sup> Surveyor and the . . . Citty Surveyors',<sup>2</sup> the actual entry of the report gives it as Wren's, adding 'which was also assented to by Mr. Hooke' in brackets after it.<sup>3</sup> The report of November 20th, 1672, the last of the important amending reports, is still more conclusive. Deferential almost to the point of servility, its preamble begins: 'Wee whose names are subscribed . . . Have together with Christopher Wren Esq<sup>re</sup> his Majesties Surveyor Generall and the City Surveyors viewed and considered, and debated concerning the severall additional p[ar]ticulars of the New Work at Fleet River and the Wharfs thereof [and the rates to be paid for them] Which although they were all principally referred to the judgment & determinacon of Mr. Surveyor generall, yet in great modestie & civility he was pleased to desire this View and conference to be ordered as above for the more p[ar]ticular and ample satisfaccon of this Com<sup>tee</sup>. To whom Wee now Certify that Mr. Surveyor generall after severall Views upon the place, and after conferences with the City Surveyors was pleased himself to read to Us this following draught of his and their thoughts & judgments and communicate to Us the nature and reason of every p[ar]ticular.'<sup>4</sup> Further tributes to the great care and

<sup>1</sup> See the *Coal Duty Account Books*, 1, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Guildhall Recs.*, Deeds, 37. 16.

<sup>3</sup> *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, f. 18v *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> Entered in *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, ff. 43v-46. The rates to be paid for the work are also entered, and the whole report is endorsed 'Attested as to the manner of the Works and Rates above mencioned by' and then signed by Wren, Hooke and Oliver. A section of it dealt with a double sasse (sluice) for protecting the works and acting as a toll gate for the barges and lighters entering from the Thames. Wren had declared this to be necessary, and the committee had thereupon requested him to call in experts and to discuss how best to proceed. This he did, spending some hours in consultation with Jonas Moore, surveyor of the Tower Works, and Hooke. The committee recommended

attention given by Wren follow in the body of the report. If it had been written by underlings the tone might need to be discounted, but, of the four who signed it, two were respected members of the City Lands Committee, a third the Chamberlain of the city and the fourth Alderman Sir John Lawrence, F.R.S.<sup>1</sup> From such men nothing more than ordinary courtesy was requisite. If further evidence is needed, it can be found in the presents which were made to Wren. During the course of the rebuilding he received three gifts from the City, each of one hundred guineas and each connected, either in whole or in part, with the Fleet Canal. The first was voted as a direct result of the report and rates submitted by him on the revision of Fitch's initial contract.<sup>2</sup> The second was for his troubles in the commodious contrivance of the Fleet Channel, Waterline and other publick works;<sup>3</sup> and the third 'a grateful Acknowledgment of his great care and trouble in supervising' the same three.<sup>4</sup>

The venture on which so much time, trouble and money had been spent was only partially successful. The second Act had granted to the City the proceeds of the tolls to be levied for navigation of the canal, leaving to the proprietors of the ground on either side the dues for wharfage and crantage.<sup>5</sup> As the City bought the ground on each side both sets of charges accrued to it. These had been expected to produce sufficient

<sup>1</sup> Lord Mayor in 1664-65, and president of St. Thomas's Hospital.

<sup>2</sup> *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, f. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *City Cash Books*, 1/14, f. 243v. Ordered on December 18th, 1672, it was probably occasioned by his report of November 20th on Fitch's work and the consequent revision of the contract which he superintended.

<sup>4</sup> *Coal Duty Account Books*, 1, f. 140.

<sup>5</sup> Second Act, s. 41. The City was to set the navigation tolls, subject to their being approved by the Barons of the Exchequer, and the King in Council those for wharfage and crantage.

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that no definite plan be laid down, but that Fitch should be instructed to do what the three surveyors ordered in the matter. Whether anything was finally installed I do not know. Possibly not, since it would have been a considerable engineering work, and, as such, almost certain to have been mentioned by Strype. However, Wren produced a model on January 15th, 1673, and on July 26th Fitch was ordered to install a double sasse of that design near the end of the range of buildings at the end of Blackfriars: (*C.L.O.*, 1671-74, f. 55v, and *C.L.C. Journal*, 1672-74, p. 20).

May 19 1872

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the letter from the Committee for the Fleet Canal, who have asked the views of the Engineer of the Fleet Canal, especially with respect to the proposed bridge, and I am very glad to hear that for two hundred feet in length on each side of the bridge it will be necessary to have a wall of base and terrace upon a good foundation well piled, because the right in that place will be required for a timber trestle. And I further propose that the trestle to descend from the bridge may be vaulted under the pavement for the length of one hundred and twenty feet, which will not only render the wall of the trestle more secure by taking off the pressure of the earth above, and by strengthening it by partly water masonry, but will also bring an advantage which may defray great part of the expense and the risk may be done on the lower side of the bridge.

Chas. Wren

A report by Wren on the construction of the Fleet Canal

From the Corporation of London's records

to pay for the upkeep and supervision of the completed project, which would thus have become that most valuable of all improvements, a self-supporting asset. These hopes did not materialize. The two sets of rates were under consideration in 1675 and passed in 1676.<sup>1</sup> A collector was appointed in July of that year, and the receipts began in August.<sup>2</sup> After three years, in no single one of which did the City draw as much as £60 from the scheme,<sup>3</sup> it was decided to farm it. The best bid obtained was from Jervis James, gentleman, who offered in return for a thirteen years' lease to pay a rent of £100 a year, to put the place in order, and to maintain it during his tenancy. In return he stipulated that, besides the dues, he should have the use of the City's unbuilt ground fronting on to the wharves, and the first refusal of it should it be sold or leased, thus ensuring that if the project became popular he would be in a position to profit from it.<sup>4</sup> This offer was accepted, but, after a few years, James's assignee defaulted, presumably because he was losing money, and the City was faced with making good the maintenance work which he had left undone.<sup>5</sup> Rents for the storehouses, which might have turned the scale in favour of the City, were equally disappointing. Though applications had been received for them long before the project had been completed, when it came to the point few tenants came forward. As Strype observed, 'that Project did not take'.<sup>6</sup>

Financially, therefore, the scheme was not a success. Ogilby's map, published in 1677, correctly showed lighters

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 80, f. 181; 81, ff. 125 *et seq.*, 218v, 244v. To protect the royal customs duties it was stipulated, and the City agreed, that no part of the canal area should constitute a legal quay for shipping or landing imports or exports.

<sup>2</sup> *City Cash Books*, 1/15, f. 215. The collector was William Boulter.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1/15, f. 215; 1/16, ff. 48v, 132v, 211.

<sup>4</sup> *City Lands Committee, Grants Book*, v, f. 157. James undertook at the outset to pave half the wharves belonging to the City, on both sides of the channel next the campshot, to pave the wharves anew later on, to keep the paving in good repair, to cleanse the channel and keep it cleansed, to repair the rails, campshot and brickwork of wharves and channel, and to keep them repaired in the future – a formidable task.

<sup>5</sup> This last is presumed from the fact that the City was willing to spend £150 on prosecuting him: (*City Cash Books*, 1/19, f. 110).

<sup>6</sup> Strype's *Stow*, bk. I, p. 12b.

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moored in the channel, but the numbers of those which used it were not enough to cover the outlay on dredging and repairs. As against this, there were many who made illicit use of the wharves and even of the storehouses.<sup>1</sup> In an area with all too few open spaces the broad stretch on each side of the channel was a temptation too great to be resisted. They were used as standing grounds for carts, as storage places for timber, and as dumps for rubbish. Coaches were parked along them and coachmakers used them as a repairing ground more commodious than their own cramped yards. Stone was brought there for sawing, and the enterprising keeper of the Mermaid tavern 'set a table and bench on the wharfe before [it]', to the increase of his custom and the detriment of its lawful users. More important, the clear line of the wharves helped to make good the lack of an adequate street running north and south either inside or outside the western face of the city wall. Carts and coaches alike passed so often along them that the pavements were broken and the roofing of the vaults threatened.<sup>2</sup> The moral was plain. The volume of water traffic was declining in proportion to that borne through the streets, and the need for a road was greater than the need for a canal. Very fortunately for London the scheme which had been carried through to benefit the latter could be converted to the advantage of the former. In 1733, a bare ten years after Wren's death, the canal was arched over from Holborn Bridge to Fleet Bridge. The wharves were made roads, and the strip in the centre a home for the old Stocks Market. In 1766 the lower reach was also covered in, and Blackfriars Bridge, opened three years later, set the seal on the triumph of road over river. To-day traffic rolls unobstructed over the broad line of Thomas Fitch's work, and few realize that the Fleet Canal flows beneath it. Thus an apparent failure was turned into a success, though in a manner none of its planners could have foreseen. Even in the

<sup>1</sup> Access to them was obtained by cutting entrances from the cellars of the houses adjacent: (*Repert.*, 89, f. 95v).

<sup>2</sup> *C.L.P.*, 1675, report dated November 10th, 1675.



## FLEET CANAL AND THAMES QUAY

intervening years, however, there was probably a balance in favour of the scheme. A narrow sewer fringed with 'small tenements, sheds and laystalls' had been converted into 'a spacious Place with very good Buildings on both sides'. An evil slum had been made attractive and, if few barges took advantage of the 'very commodious' channel with 'five Foot [of] Water at the Head thereof, at Holbourn Bridge . . . and that . . . at the slackest of all high Tides',<sup>1</sup> the gain in health and in amenities must have represented a handsome dividend on the capital laid out.

### § II—THE THAMES QUAY

The fate of the projected Thames Quay was very different. When plans for the new London were being discussed it had been well to the fore, and not without reason. Much of the water-front before the Fire had been occupied by sheds, yards and all the humble familiar mass of broken-down gear to be found on any strand. Public landing places, utilitarian rather than beautiful, appeared at intervals, alternating with laystalls whose noisome presence urgently proclaimed the need for reform. The whole area, landing places, laystalls, and wharves was approached by an inconvenient network of lanes, so narrow that the drays in their passage endangered houses and pedestrians, and so steep that the drays themselves were endangered every time a horse stumbled on the ascent. To courtiers fresh from Holland the place was an offence, and there were not lacking men like Evelyn to proclaim the superiority of the water-fronts in Genoa or Constantinople.<sup>2</sup> The pride which for

<sup>1</sup> Styrpe's *Stow*, bk. III, pp. 279b, 280. Styrpe's account of the making of the canal is not very accurate. Unless he includes Fleet Bridge, work did not begin in 1668, and it was not finished in 1673. The cost was far greater than the £27,777, which he cites, and indeed he himself gives a different figure in another part of his book.

Failure to cleanse the canal adequately led to a gradual degeneration into its old state. By the time that Blackfriars Bridge was built, it had once again become a stench and a nuisance in a district whose inhabitants were a reproach to the city.

<sup>2</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 94, f. 51. Evelyn's whole manuscript is a plea for the beautification of the city.

several generations had been seeking to make London a city worthy of its own status was easily inflamed, and, under the patronage of Charles himself, the movement for reform rapidly gained ground. To such, the Fire was a golden opportunity, and, by a chance which rarely favours the cause of reform, those most nearly concerned also supported the idea of an improvement. More accustomed to the state of affairs, and not in the least ready to sacrifice their money to gratify the tastes of others, the citizens were influenced by the need for additional wharves, to favour a scheme which promised to satisfy their utmost demands at a minimum cost to themselves. In consequence the Thames Quay was at once incorporated in all the important plans for the rebuilding. Two of the parties in the Commons mentioned by Oldenburg, the radical reformers and the moderates, were anxious to see it carried out, and in the draft plan agreed between the City and the Privy Council it was accepted and given a depth of eighty feet from the river northwards. From the Tower to the Temple the river was to be flanked by a broad open space, embellishing London with a fair, paved quay, fringed with dignified houses, guaranteeing swift and immediate access to any fire in the lanes below Thames Street, and giving ample landing room for goods and passengers. Opposition came only from those who were anxious to sacrifice all improvements to gain a swifter rebuilding. Yet in spite of this almost universal support, and in spite of the fact that the City favoured it, the project failed so completely that to-day no trace of it remains, and even its history is confused.

Part of this confusion has been caused by the wording of the two Rebuilding Acts, and part by lack of adequate records. The first Act, which might have been expected to make provision for a scheme supported by all parties, did not even give it direct mention. Instead, a brief clause enacted that 'noe House Outhouse or other building whatsoever (Cranes and Sheds for the present use onely excepted) shall be built or erected within the distance of Forty foote of such part of any

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Wall Key or Wharfe as bounds the River of Thames from Tower Wharfe to London Bridge and from London Bridge to the Temple Staires . . . before the fower and twentieth day of March [1669]'.<sup>1</sup> This is a prohibition similar to that which was applied to the land on either side of the Fleet river, but it is nothing more. The great public quay which was to run level and open along the north bank of the Thames is barely foreshadowed. Farther on, however, there is evidence that it had once had its place in the Act. The clause governing the application of the coal duty makes provision 'for the satisfaction of such persons whose Grounds shall be imployed for the makeing of Wharfes or Keyes on the North side of the River of Thames'.<sup>2</sup> Evidently the purchase of land for making a quay had been discussed, though the Act as passed made no reference to it. It seems probable, in fact, that Parliament had been unable to come to any agreement on the subject before the King had driven it to pass a measure which, however incomplete, would yet end the state of suspended activity and allow the citizens to begin rebuilding. To preserve the necessary land until the next session it had therefore inserted a brief clause prohibiting the erection of any save temporary structures on the area required. Thus the Thames Quay seems to have shared the lot of the Fleet scheme and the problem of the suppression of redundant parish churches. Left unsolved by the first Act, it was not abandoned. The solution had been postponed, but it had not been given up.

Because of the delays already discussed, Parliament's next move could not be completed until more than three years after its first. Statutory provision for the Thames Quay was therefore deferred until in April 1670 the second Rebuilding Act passed both Houses and received the royal assent. Then, for the first time, the quay received the sanction of Parliament and passed from the ranks of plans proposed to those of plans to be carried out. This was a great step forward, but it is important to realize how markedly the period of waiting had

<sup>1</sup> S. 33.

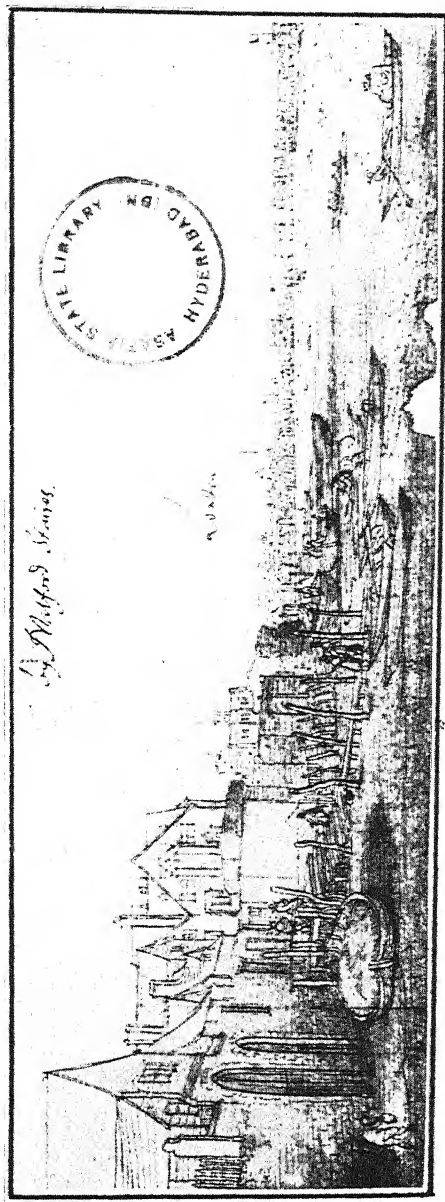
<sup>2</sup> S. 37.

affected the scheme. Time, and the experience gained from the rebuilding, might in any case have been expected to produce changes, but in this instance the chief agent was the report of the royal commissioners appointed on March 29th, 1667, to regulate the port of London and to set out the boundaries of its legal wharves and quays.<sup>1</sup> These commissioners did their work thoroughly, and their report was adopted in its entirety by Charles. Although it dealt mainly with the area below the bridge it exercised a strong influence on the scheme for a general Thames Quay. Below the bridge the commissioners caused the wharves between the inlet west of the Tower and that in front of St. Magnus to be brought up to a common level<sup>2</sup> and the passages, lanes and cartways leading down to them to be made at least eleven feet wide. They regulated the form and appearance of the buildings fronting the forty-foot line<sup>3</sup> and, in accordance with their powers, laid down that the boundaries between each property should be marked, not as formerly with posts and rails, but by unobtrusive denter stones set in the pavement. As their measurements had established firstly that the existing quays along this section of the river already had a minimum depth of forty feet, and secondly that, with allowances for stairs, passages and the like, they covered the whole distance between the points mentioned, the com-

<sup>1</sup> Appointed under the statute 14 Charles II, c. 11, the commission included leading representatives of the City and of the merchants of London. Its report is most readily available in Strype's *Stowe*, bk. V, p. 281 *et seq.* The commissioners were thoroughly imbued with the idea of beautifying the water-front, and a number of their recommendations were framed to this end. Even the cranes were to be painted blue and adorned with the King's arms. The Farmers and Officers of the Customs were ordered to see that the report's recommendations were carried out.

<sup>2</sup> Somers Quay, which had already been raised in accordance with the clause in the first Act for the prevention of flooding, was taken as the standard. This gave a height of five feet above the normal spring tide mark. It is impossible to tell whether the order to raise the others was strictly obeyed, but it seems probable that it was. Rubble was available in plenty, and no wharf had to be raised by more than two feet. The tenant of Bears Quay and Pages Quay declared that he had 'made good the said Wharves towards the Thames, rayseed the same and new layed the Camshotts of the same and paved the same which cost . . . Seven or Eight hundred pounds or thereabouts' (B.M., Add. MS. 5103, f. 59), and a general petition of the wharfingers that the whole line had been raised as ordered: (*P.R.O.*, *S. P. Dom.*, Charles II, 230, No. 80).

<sup>3</sup> This line had been duly set out by the City: (*Repert.*, 73, f. 19).



The Thames by Millford Stairs — a sketch by Hollar showing the kind of foreshore so disliked by those who sought to beautify London. The man in the left corner is going down to draw water from the river

pletion of the work which they had recommended provided a quay which was a 'Thames Quay' in all but its ownership. The wharves stretched, unbroken by dividing lines, for the full distance practicable<sup>1</sup> for the lower sector of the proposed public quay. They remained private property but, in accordance with the first Act, they were devoid of unlicensed buildings or obstructions. Thus by the time the second Act was under way, a 'Thames Quay' was actually in being below the bridge. More important still, it was a 'Thames Quay' which, though created almost without cost to public funds, yet apparently served all the purposes for which the original scheme had been designed.<sup>2</sup>

Parliament took due notice of this position when it came to discuss the second Act. It left the sector below the bridge untouched, and made no attempt either to buy out the owners there or to convert the wharves into any form of public owner-

<sup>1</sup> There was no real possibility of its being continued round the inlet in front of St. Magnus, and this fact was soon accepted. In July 1668 the City authorized Mrs. Vynor to rebuild her house against St. Magnus on the north-east end of the bridge 'it being . . . declared that it is not intended nor by his Ma<sup>y</sup> expected (and so lately declared at the Councill board) that the said Ground and other Roome thereabouts should be laid open to the Key': (*Repert.*, 73, f. 229).

<sup>2</sup> The wharves did not present an unbroken line towards the river. There were inlets of varying sizes at Dice Quay, Sabbs Dock and Billingsgate, and the commissioners tried to induce the owners of the first two to have them brought out level with the others. This attempt failed. Billingsgate, much the largest of them, presented a more difficult problem. The spaces along the two sides at right-angles to the river were used only as footways to the common stairs, and for the unloading of victuals. Their width of fourteen feet was ample for these purposes, both of which would suffer from any widening which allowed carts to pass along them. The commissioners contended that the inlet should be accounted as a part of the river, and that the forty-foot line should run right round it. The City protested that the inlet was an artificial work and that the sides beyond a distance of forty feet from its mouth could be any width that was convenient. The area at the north end of the inlet was open for more than the requisite distance and did not come into the argument, but the sides included some of the most valuable building land in the neighbourhood - 'which in that place is of extraordinary value' - and the inhabitants were keenly interested in the result (see *Repert.*, 73, f. 19). The dispute continued for some time. Those of the inhabitants who were tenants to the City, petitioning in May 1671 for abatement of rent and extended leases, alleged, *inter alia*, 'that they were long impeded in their building by p[ro]hibiçon from his Ma<sup>s</sup> Comers'. They received scant sympathy, the City Lands Committee declaring that it was their own fault if they had delayed rebuilding 'for they had constant assurances from this Comitte to bee indemnified and protected if they would have proceeded in their s<sup>d</sup> Building': (*C.L.O.*, 1671-74, f. 56). The City's view finally won the day, but, as a concession, they widened the footways along the sides, and the coal duty books include a number of payments on this score.

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ship. Instead it accepted the idea of an open quay in private ownership as an alternative to the original scheme — perhaps as an improvement on it — and proceeded to apply it to the sector above the bridge. The relevant clauses<sup>1</sup> laid down firstly that 'for the better Benefit and Accommodation of Trade and for other great Conveniences there shall be left a continuous Tract of Ground all along from London Bridge to the Temple of the Breadth of Forty Foot of Assize from the North Side of the River of Thames to be converted to a Key or publick and open Wharf', and secondly that this whole area was to 'lie open and at large without any Division or Separation and . . . the bounds of each Proprietor's Ground therein . . . distinguished only by denter stones to be placed in the Pavement thereof'. With the exception of cranes,<sup>2</sup> docks and stairs, all buildings, inclosures and obstructions were to be removed, the ground levelled and the line of the quay marked out. This done, the projectors believed that the city would be endowed with new and ample wharves, a more beautiful river front, and an excellent safeguard against destructive fires, whilst the proprietors of the new wharves would receive a steady income from the merchandise using them.

The importance of the alterations in the scheme are obvious. It was no longer necessary to provide large sums to buy out owners, or to waste long hours negotiating with the various interests concerned. The City's share of the coal dues was not saddled with a charge estimated at some eight years' receipts, and the City itself was relieved of the cost of carrying out the clearing and levelling of the wharves. On the other hand, it was recognized that the compulsory conversion into wharves of properties previously used for all kinds of purposes would be bound

<sup>1</sup> Ss. 38-40, 43.

<sup>2</sup> The cranes of the period were formidable structures, two storeys high, the upper containing the machinery, the lower an opening by which carts could enter for goods to be lowered into them. The commissioners' report laid down that in the sector below the bridge single cranes might be twelve feet and double twenty feet broad. Their maximum depth from the river wall was limited to twenty-one feet in each case and they had to be kept open for common passage through the lower story, allowing a clearance of at least ten and a half feet.

to affect their worth. Some might be increased in value, others reduced. Below the bridge there would have been no need to legislate for the latter, but conditions above the bridge were very different and, as it has sometimes been contended that the quay was an unqualified improvement for all concerned, it is perhaps important to realize how little resemblance there was between the two areas. Below the bridge the river was a main source of wealth, and accommodation had to be provided along its banks for all the major shipping using the port. Despite the East India Company's use of reaches below the Pool, and the growing competition of sufferance wharves, the demand remained heavy and the available space none too great. Wharves and storehouses were the most profitable line of development for land fronting on to the river, and ordinary commercial demand had caused them to cover the whole of it. The speed with which they had been cleared of rubbish, and the willingness of their owners to spend large sums in raising them testify to the profits which they were earning. Above the Bridge conditions were very different. The water-front there had already succumbed to that slow course of development which has driven, and still drives, the great ships farther and farther down the river. The drawbridge no longer swelled the bridge-masters' revenues with its tolls, and without it large vessels could not pass through to the upper river. The days of Queenhithe's glory had passed and Billingsgate, once the inferior, had long outdistanced its rival. By the year of the Fire traffic above the bridge consisted mainly of lighters and barges. The need for wharves there, though it was growing with the growth of London, was smaller than the need below the bridge, and their uses were somewhat different. Queenhithe still received its cargoes of meal, and with them an increasing quantity of fruit, but much of the waterborne trade using the area between the Temple and the bridge consisted of bulky commodities for which storage was also required. Timber, building materials and coals were all prominent. Seasonal imports, their disposal might be spread throughout the year. Too heavy to be moved



far, too easily pilfered to be left unprotected, they needed storage space within enclosures on the wharves themselves. Lay-stalls, equally necessary, were equally incompatible with an open quay. It was questionable, in fact, whether the ban on fences, sheds and buildings, which was conceived essential for the prevention of another Fire, was in the interests of the trades which would use the wharves. Conversion to an open quay might well cause existing wharves to suffer, as well as causing properties previously used for other purposes to deteriorate in value. Parliament knew this and, though it expected that many properties would gain through the change, it recognized the need to provide for the depreciation of others. This it did, and the clause is explicit evidence of the falsity of the belief that the scheme was advantageous to all owners. The preamble reads 'And whereas some parts of the . . . Ground . . . designed for publick Wharfs . . . will be much improved and some other Parts thereof . . . much impaired in Value by reason of converting the same to the Uses aforesaid. . . .' The rest of the clause made provision for both contingencies, laying down that owners of improved properties should be assessed for melioration, whilst those who had suffered were to receive compensation, the amounts in each disputed case being decided by a jury after the manner used for land taken for the streets. How Parliament expected the balance to lie between the two is not clear, but, as no specific arrangements were made for a surplus, it is reasonable to assume that none was anticipated. Compensation, though it also was not specifically provided for, attached, by virtue of the general wording of the Act, to the City's share of the coal duty.<sup>1</sup>

The framers of the second Act, having officially created the quay, took pains to see that its actual execution was not unduly delayed. Under the Act, the line of the quay, and the position of the various cranes, stairs and docks had to be demarcated, with the King's approval, by June 24th, 1670, and all buildings, sheds, fences, and other obstructions cleared away within

<sup>1</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 94, ff. 296v, 299v.

eight months. The ground was then to be levelled, and after that the authorized cranes, stairs and docks could be built or repaired. Since parts of the ground were still covered with rubbish and ruins, including the blackened remains of Baynard's Castle, the work involved was considerable, and the time limit none too generous. However, soon after the Fleet scheme had been settled, the City set about its share. On June 14th the surveyors were ordered to consult with Wren, and a week later the court of Aldermen approved the plan they had drafted, and ordered it to be taken to Charles for his approval. This obtained, the building line was to be staked out.<sup>1</sup> All this was faithfully done — and then progress ceased. The City was fully occupied with matters more necessary to its rehabilitation than the creation of a quay which would bring it no direct advantage whatsoever, and had no officials to spare to coerce those who failed to clear their own ground. However, when Wren reported to the King that although the eight months had expired the quay was still 'every where inclosed and incumbered with Pales or Brickwalls irregular houses and buildings Piles of Timber Billetts Faggotts and heapes of Coles many boarded sheds and several great Laystalls and . . . the old Towers of Baynards Castle . . . yet standing',<sup>2</sup> it hastened to order a wholesale clearance, threatening 'his Majestyes displeasure and the utmost penalties of the . . . Act'. The owners of the land concerned were instructed to apply to the long suffering City Lands Committee so that they might negotiate for compensation 'accordingly as their . . . ground is impaired or lessened in value'. How much was done does not appear, probably very little, for over two years later Hooke was busy warning the wharfingers to take down buildings and obstructions.<sup>3</sup> Certainly during those years no money whatsoever was paid out as compensation for the land within the forty-foot line.

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 75, ff. 227, 244.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 76, ff. 79v-80v (February 21st, 1671).

<sup>3</sup> *Diary*, op. cit., pp. 58-9, September 3rd, 1673, 'warned the wharfingers to take downe' and, on the following day, at the Guildhall, 'Wharfingers about keys summonsd in, some bound over to pull downe'.

In the meantime, however, the City had devised a new and much more interesting venture, which they designed should take the place of the scheme contained in the Act. Where, when, and how it originated is still unknown.<sup>1</sup> Possibly Evelyn's ideas had something to do with it; possibly it was suggested by the need to find a dumping ground for soil from the Fleet Canal. In any case, once conceived, it caught the imagination of planners and practical men alike. Reduced to its barest outline, the proposal was that, to create the Quay, the north bank of the Thames should be pushed forward as far as possible into the river in such a way that the line of the wharves ran evenly — a fair, level expanse — from the Temple to the Bridge. The extent of the encroachment varied from place to place. At one point it was to be eighty feet, at another only twenty, but the total represented a scheme which, for its time, was as great a conception as the present Victoria embankment.<sup>2</sup> Compared with the drab prohibitions of the statutory quay, it was a venture with almost magical possibilities.

Once conceived, it was pursued with vigour. At the beginning of May the City Lands Committee decided to set about the production of a final draft of the waterline, and sent Hooke to consult Wren about it.<sup>3</sup> At the end of the month they ordered the surveyors to take the plan they had made and show it to him,<sup>4</sup> and by the beginning of July they were ready for the final step. On the 10th it was arranged that, after the line of the stakes set out in June 1670 had been plotted on a vellum

<sup>1</sup> The Fire Court were informed on March 31st, 1671, that, to make the forty-foot quay, ground would be taken out of the river in front of the liberty of Blackfriars: (*Guildhall Recs.*, G. f. 151v). An encroachment here seems to have formed part of the scheme submitted to Charles in the previous June, see *P.R.O.*, *S.P. Dom.*, Charles II, 293, No. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Although they have little in common, the Thames Quay is sometimes spoken of as though it was a forerunner of the modern embankment. Such a comparison is decidedly misleading. The Quay was never intended to do away with such inlets as those at Queenhithe, Puddle Dock and Whitefriars, whilst at the Fleet Canal foot passengers would have been compelled to go inland to Bridewell Bridge, and carts to Fleet Street.

<sup>3</sup> *C.L.O.*, f. 55.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 56v.

map,<sup>1</sup> with special reference to the stretch from Bridewell Dock to Puddle Dock, the Lord Mayor should be asked to go with Wren and Hooke to obtain the King's approval. This was to be exemplified by a grant under the great seal assuring to the City all that it thought requisite for its purposes.<sup>2</sup> All this was successfully accomplished. The King was pleased with the scheme, granted the City's requests, and authorized the necessary letters patent.<sup>3</sup> On December 4th, 1671, the letters were sealed, and the scheme fully launched.<sup>4</sup>

The letters patent themselves are a rather barren document confined strictly to essentials. They record the King's approval of the 'Module forme or draught' of the quay as submitted by the City and order that it shall be carried out accordingly. With the proviso that the strip next to the new waterline is to be held subject to the provisions of the second Act concerning the quay, they then grant to the City 'ALL that our Ground and Soyle whatsoever which is or shall or may bee taken in from and out of our said River of Thames to the intent to make the said line between London bridge and the Temple . . . Uniforme and Regular in such manner and forme according to the said Module forme and Draught thereof hereunto annexed'. A special clause excepts from the grant a strip of approximately ninety feet in length between Paul's Wharf and Baynard's Castle, which, it is declared, is intended for St. Paul's,<sup>5</sup> and with that the active section of the letters ends. Fortunately the plan for the new water line, which was attached to the patent, has escaped the fate of so many plans, and survives with them.

<sup>1</sup> There are two drawings by Hooke in the British Museum, which may possibly be the originals of this map. There is, however, nothing to identify them with it, and they may equally well represent plans made at some other stage of the business of the quay: (Add. MS. 5238, ff. 82, 83).

<sup>2</sup> *C.L.O.*, f. 60. The section specially mentioned was important because the Fleet Canal works could not be finally drafted until it had been established.

<sup>3</sup> *P.R.O.*, *S.P. Dom.*, Charles II, 293, Nos. 38-9.

<sup>4</sup> The letters patent are in the comptroller's office at the Guildhall. Transcripts have been printed and the plan reproduced by Mr. S. Perks in *Essays on Old London* (Cambridge, 1927) and *The Water Line of the City of London after the Great Fire* (1935).

<sup>5</sup> In January 1672 the Dean of St. Paul's applied to the City suggesting that the limits of this land should be agreed between them, and future disputes thereby avoided. This was done: (*C.L.O.*, 1671-74, f. 2v).

This, and a private letter written by Wren about the whole scheme, give far more information than that contained in the actual wording of the patent. The plan shows what was probably the line of the wharves at the time when it was prepared, with the then position of the various landing stairs, and in front of them the proposed new line, with its stairs. The public quay contemplated in the new scheme is shaded, its northern edge forming what will be the building line when everything has been completed. The width varies. Close to London Bridge it is less than forty feet, but west of the Fleet, where the demand for new wharves had already threatened the gardens of the former great houses, it is much more than that figure. The encroachment on the Thames also varies, its conformation suggesting that it had probably been designed to take in all the shallows between the old wharves and the deep water of the channel. The shape of the stairs strengthens this idea. They are all shown with approaches from the side, which would be possible if they led down into deep water, but improbable if they had to follow the retreating tide out across the shallows.<sup>1</sup> If this conjecture is correct the City stood to gain relief from the troubles caused by the shelves which periodically hindered navigation, and also from the unlicensed encroachments made by wharf-owners along the river.<sup>2</sup> Apart from such motives, Wren's letter shows more immediate reasons for the scheme, and, since it also explains the origin of the strip retained for St. Paul's it seems worth setting it out in full. Written to Sancroft, then dean of the cathedral, it is dated September 16th, 1671,<sup>3</sup> and runs:

<sup>1</sup> The public stairs at Blackfriars, which are shown in a number of views of the Thames, are an excellent example of this type. They projected for many feet beyond the high tide mark.

<sup>2</sup> Too much importance should not be attached to the proposed new line. It was a draught representing the idea the City had in mind, and not a carefully surveyed and estimated plan, to be carried out to the last detail. It would certainly have been altered in the course of its construction, and probably even before the work was begun. For example, the committee appointed on July 17th, 1672, with the task of considering its execution, was instructed also to consider whether the design annexed to the patent was thoroughly convenient and unprejudicial to river and vessels: (*C.L.O.*, 1671-74, f. 27).

<sup>3</sup> Bodleian Library, Tanner MS. 145, No. 171, quoted in volume XIII of the Wren Society, p. 50 (Oxford, 1936).

'Sr

'There comes in my way a businesse that concernes Ye Church of St. Paules, in wch I desire to have Yr thoughtes and concurrence, or else to relinquish it as you shall Judge best for the interest of ye Church. The City are falling upon making the wharf from the Temple to ye bridge, and they carry the Water Line farther out into the River and make it generally straighter, the old line being very irregular; at the mouth of Bridewell Dock it will be 80 foot or more farther into the Thames, in other places, 40, 20, and sometimes lesse, at Paules Wharfe it will be about 30 foot. Eastward of the Staire stood the great Crane wch was erected to raise the great stones of the Portick.<sup>1</sup> It stood upon part of the City wast, part upon another man's ground induced to suffer it, as I am informed, at ye request of the Archbishop. Westward of this Crane to Barnard's Castle are all Tenants to the Church of Paules.

'The Intention of the City in carrying on this wharfe into the Thames, is pretended to be for the King's satisfaction (and it is trew that he likes it) but it is more their own advantage; for being allowed publique mony to buy out<sup>2</sup> men's interest in order to make the 40 ft passage of the Key according to the Act, they will save much of the mony and make the additional ground pay for what they take upon the score of melioration and soe suffering men that have not yet built to come forward within forty foot of the new Line they will have back ground to lay their comodities, and those that have already built conformable to ye distance of 40 foot from ye old line and so stande behind their neighbours will enclose courts before their houses to make up the range.

'This is the designe but it cannot be effected without a Grant under the broad seale to the City of soe much of the soyle of the River as shall be taken in by this new line.

'This Grant the City are passing, I interposed that there

<sup>1</sup> Inigo Jones's portico.

<sup>2</sup> This is an error, as purchase was not mentioned in the Act.

## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

might be an exception of soe much ground upon this Key as might serve for 2 good cranes for the building of St. Paules, that is about 100 foot<sup>1</sup> between Barnard's Castle and the Staires which is all before yr own Tenants. It will be very necessary to have this convenience and while this is on the anvile, it will be as easy to have the grant of soe much to the Church as of all the rest of the City. The City will not I presume oppose it, and I have mentioned the thing obliquely to the King, but not as yet pressed for his grant without yr concurrence, I have prepared Mr. Williamson who doth the City businesse and he will be zealous.

'The question is now whether you will passe a grant in behalfe of the Church (wch will be charges but I thinke it will pay for the Charge both of the patent and making the wharfe, having stone and rubbish enough) or whether you will be content with a proviso on the City patent for 2 Cranes and the use of the wharfe for ye repaires of St. Paules. The businesse is pressed on by the City and therefore I desire Your speedy resolution.

Sir

I am

Your faithful humble Servant

Chr. Wren.'

Whatever the City's motives may have been, the patent was the highest point reached by the 'Thames Quay'. Thereafter the scheme gradually faded away, a 'might-have-been' which dazzled for a while, flickered on for many years, and finally vanished into oblivion. The years immediately following its peak were chequered with attempts to enforce it. At intervals the Crown intervened on behalf of the statutory prohibition on buildings. At intervals the City debated the position. But the only consistent threads running through the whole of this period were the complaints of unsatisfied owners and the courtesy of the City's refusal to meet them. Each

<sup>1</sup> When the measurement was made the strip was found to be some 90 feet long.

attempt at enforcement proved a failure. Limited successes were obtained, but neither individually nor cumulatively were they able to create either the new waterline or an open quay next the river.

The briefest of outlines will suffice for the years of flickering. During the summer of 1672 the City Lands Committee was considering how best to make the waterline of the plan annexed to the patent. In May, urged on by the questions of Sir Thomas Draper who owned land there, they discussed the section between Blackfriars and Whitefriars.<sup>1</sup> In July the whole wharf was under review, and with it the possibility of vaulting parts of it to serve as storage places.<sup>2</sup> September saw a further bout of activity,<sup>3</sup> with decisions to amend Puddle and Dowgate Docks in accordance with the patent, and also to make alterations at Blackfriars. In November there were more consultations,<sup>4</sup> and in January of 1673 matters apparently reached a critical stage. The Chamberlain and the comptroller were then ordered to draw up a list of questions and to ask the Attorney-General for an opinion on them, together with his advice on the whole matter of the quay and the construction of the new wharf. In particular he was to be asked whether the cost of the whole work could be made, by virtue of the general wording of the second Act, a charge on the residue of the coal dues.<sup>5</sup> What answer he gave to such leading questions does not appear, but, whether it was favourable or not, an examination of the prospective yield of the duties would have been sufficient to deter an ever-cautious City from committing itself too deeply. With the Fleet scheme to show the difficulties and the expenses which a quay might produce,

<sup>1</sup> *City Lands Committee, Grants Book*, iv, f. 65v.

<sup>2</sup> *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, f. 27.

<sup>3</sup> A committee sat to consider 'The Answering his Mai<sup>ties</sup> expecta<sup>cons</sup> and theire owne purposes touch[ing] the new Key on the Northside of the Thames and the Water line': (*City Lands Committee, Grants Book*, iv, f. 71). In company with Wren they twice inspected the shore. The results of their discussions are indicated: (*C.L.O.*, 1671-74, ff. 34v-36).

<sup>4</sup> Hooke's *Diary*, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, f. 55.



its caution was likely to be redoubled, and this attitude apparently won the day, for nothing more was authorized until July 1673.

In the interval, others interested had intervened. The Lord Chancellor had been active, and the court of Aldermen had received a petition from various owners who had been given no satisfaction for the laying open of their ground.<sup>1</sup> The latter could be passed off with a promise to help with a petition to the King for relief, but the Chancellor could not be disposed of so easily. Hooke's diary serves as a commentary on the results of his intervention, the entries ascending like a scale, towards a climax which never came.<sup>2</sup> 'At Lord Chancellors and Dr. Wrens with Samuell [a bricklayer] viewed the key' is the first. Five days later comes, 'at Lord Mayors and Lord Chancellors. Lord Chancellor commanded a mapp of the key from London bridge to Dowgate to be made'. Two entries at the end of a week show the results of these moves, 'measured wharfs with Harry at water side' appears on one day, and 'Drew map for Lord Chancellor' on the next. After considering the map, orders were given for clearing all save the stretch of wharf from Dowgate to Whitefriars. Two months elapsed, and then, as the obstructions still remained, the Chancellor again intervened. The diary notes 'Chancellor gave order about key and for attendance on the councell', followed in a few days by 'warnd the wharfingers to take downe' and 'wharfingers about keys summond in, some bound over to pull downe'. This was not the end, for on the following day he attended the Chancellor until one o'clock, and at the end of the month he was calling upon the wharfingers to pave. With that the spurt

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 78, f. 198 (June 12th, 1673). This petition was a direct consequence of the Chancellor's intervention which had resulted in an order to the owners to clear the wharf in accordance with the second Act.

<sup>2</sup> The entries may be found under the following dates: May 21st (p. 44); May 26th (p. 45); May 31st and June 1st (p. 45); August 29th (p. 58); September 3rd and 4th (pp. 58-9); September 24th (p. 61).

There are others which relate to the quay, but those cited cover the outline of the Chancellor's intervention. The disjointed nature of the entries makes them difficult to interpret and also to assign.

## FLEET CANAL AND THAMES QUAY

of activity seems to have fizzled out,<sup>1</sup> though in February of the following year there is a reference to his giving the Lord Mayor a report of the state on the quay.<sup>2</sup> Possibly connected with this compulsory move, possibly for quite different reasons, that summer also saw two moves by the City itself. Orders were given for the wharfing out of the stretch between Bridewell Dock and Young's wharf in Blackfriars in accordance with the waterline,<sup>3</sup> and a lease of Dunghill wharf was granted on condition that it was brought forward level with its neighbour, Brooke's wharf.<sup>4</sup>

In 1674 there were further interventions, further requests for compensation, and further discussions at the Guildhall, but nothing on a grand scale was accomplished. Succeeding years were equally barren. The reason was simple, and certain to continue. The necessary money was not available, and without it the City was not going to conduct a wholesale reclamation of the Thames shallows, or owners to throw open their ground.<sup>5</sup> The Privy Council could intervene, and by so doing create a temporary activity; the more amenable owners could comply with orders, and, with certificates to support them, submit claims to be compensated for their losses; and the City could debate and promise; but, failing money, the City's scheme and the Parliament's scheme were bound to remain alike phantoms of the realities for which they were intended. The former could not be accomplished without immediate expenditure, the latter

<sup>1</sup> The petitions which led to the Lord Chancellor's action may be found in the registers of the Privy Council (2/64, *passim*). None are recorded after 1674. Two memoranda in the *State Papers Domestic* (Charles II, 336, Nos. 192 and 197. 1), give summaries of the petitions and counter-petitions up to July 27th, 1673. The second ends with a note that the latest clearance order 'is not yet done whereby it seemes the King and Council [are] slighted'. Slighted they remained.

<sup>2</sup> Entry on p. 87 under February 20th, 1674.

<sup>3</sup> *C.L.C. Journal*, 1672-74, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *City Lands Committee, Grants Book*, v, f. 17v. The grant was made to Thomas Neale, Esq. The City reserved to itself all compensation due for laying the ground open in accordance with the second Act.

<sup>5</sup> The City made various attempts to obtain a prolongation of the coal dues, both for the parish churches and for itself. Early in 1674 it was seeking such an extension, and stressing that the money was needed for the waterline. It seems then to have thought that compensation would require over £100,000: (*P.R.O., S.P. Dom.*, Charles II, 360, No. 170).

could only be maintained at the expense of the owners. The City's scheme was tacitly abandoned; Parliament's slowly disappeared as enforcement weakened and compensation remained unpaid.

Yet, for all the failure of the greater schemes, it would be false to suppose that nothing was done. Each of the various measures into which the projects could be divided was successfully carried through at some point along the water-front, and even wharfing out, the most outstanding and the most difficult of them, may be included in this generalization. As a whole, the attempt to alter the wharf-line was a failure, but many references show that in details there were genuine successes. The area round the mouth of the Fleet Canal was certainly carried out into the river. Thomas Fitch was paid for wharfing out a section east of the Fleet,<sup>1</sup> and John Young for doing the same.<sup>2</sup> Fitch and Joseph Avis also carried out a section by Whitefriars,<sup>3</sup> and Fitch's account for the Fleet Canal records that the wharfs were 'brought out according to the Waterlyne'.<sup>4</sup> A part of the land reclaimed at Blackfriars was even leased by the City<sup>5</sup> — surely proof positive that the work had been done. In other parts there were also gains which can reasonably be established, notably at Dowgate and Puddle Docks, where wharfing and vaulting appear to have cost a full £1000.<sup>6</sup> For the rest, however, one can only assume that some of the proposals for extensions must have achieved results, although no amount of poring over unreliable maps is likely to establish their exact dimensions. Another section of the project, the planning and royal authorization of docks and stairs, was also scrupulously carried out. Wren, as the King's representative, was always consulted and his wishes observed.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Coal Duty Account Books* under November 28th, 1672.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, under December 20th, 1673, and June 19th, 1674.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, under October 3rd, 1672.

<sup>4</sup> *C.L.C. Journal*, 1672-74, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> *C.L.P.*, 1674, documents, dated September 23rd and October 15th, 1674, concerning the Apothecaries' Company.

<sup>6</sup> *Coal Duty Account Books* under November 15th and 16th, and December 18th and 21st, 1672.

<sup>7</sup> For examples see *Repert.*, 75, f. 278; *Repert.*, 77, f. 260; *C.L.O.*, 1671-74, ff. 33v-34, 38v, 40.

In this, as in each case of wharfing out, the King had no cause to complain. The City took good care not to offend, and, since by consulting Wren it reinforced the views of its own surveyors with those of a third and unpaid authority, it had good reason for its meticulousness.<sup>1</sup> A third section, the ban on building within the prohibited area, was also steadily enforced. Although in a sense this is the hardest section to prove, on *a priori* grounds it was the most likely to be carried through, and the isolated references which do occur are unanimous in suggesting that this was so. Much of the land was not particularly valuable for building purposes and, although only the most drastic measures could have prevented the intrusion of the 'encumbrances' cited in Wren's report, the re-erection of permanent buildings was not likely to be specially difficult to prevent. Apart from the many claims from persons who had not only not rebuilt but had actually laid their ground open,<sup>2</sup> the one established infringement, the rebuilding of Fishmongers' Hall, is an isolated example with every possible mitigating circumstance. It was licensed by the King. It was in accordance with his express wish that the Companies should dignify the waterfront by building their halls there, and much of its construction was carried out in the interval between the lapse of the prohibition in the first Act and the passage of the second. In any case it was behind the building line imposed by the patent, and there are suggestions that this line superseded the line as laid down by the second Act.<sup>3</sup> Apart from this instance,

<sup>1</sup> Levelling the wharves, i.e. bringing them all to a common level, seems also to have been carried out, at least in part (see *Repert.*, 75, f. 269).

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Perks has made a convenient summary of the scattered entries of these claims on pp. 10-12 of *The Water-Line of the City of London after the Great Fire*. It should be noted, however, that this summary includes various references to the Fleet Canal, which was in an entirely different category. Examples of actual certificates made by the Surveyors showing land cut off for the quay may be found in *C.L.P.*, 1670 and 1674.

<sup>3</sup> This most tempting hypothesis would help to explain why the encroachments shown on Roque's map of 1746 were so much more extensive in the western half of the quay. It is supported by a report in May 1682, stating that a proposed building at Queenhithe would 'range with the buildings on Bull Wharfe and all the other buildings Eastward which all agree with the building line exprest in the Schedule

after 1670 no references suggest further infringements. The plan of the patent shows a number of new houses, all of which lie behind its building line. In two cases before the Fire Court, all parties accepted that rebuilding could not take place within the area of the quay.<sup>1</sup> The City when leasing some of its own ground which lay across the line<sup>2</sup> specially excepted the section inside it, and, when allowing a petition for rebuilding, did the same.<sup>3</sup> Most important of all, the wardmote inquest of Queenhithe presented someone for, as they believed, infringing the quay.<sup>4</sup> If other wards were doing the same, the quay was being supported by the ordinary machinery of the City, and was therefore in no need of special protection by the higher authorities.

Yet, despite these undoubted successes, the scheme as a whole was a failure. The great wharf of the patent never came into being, and the losses occasioned by the prohibition on buildings and enclosures were never compensated by such advantages as an open quay could offer. Nor were they compensated from any other source. The unfortunate owners petitioned in vain for relief. The City, verging on bankruptcy, with no money to spare, invariably returned the only answer possible to it. It sympathized with the sufferers, promised to consider their claims as soon as it could, and pointed out the wording of the Act. Unsatisfactory to all concerned, this state of affairs endured for ten years. Then the City moved. In 1681, when claims were being pressed with more than usual vigour, it agreed that some decision must be reached.<sup>5</sup> The case was submitted to Counsel and opinions obtained on the

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MS. 5102, ff. 136 *et seq.*, 209v. Both cases were in 1674.

<sup>2</sup> *City Lands Committee, Grants Book*, v, f. 132. Grant to Mr. Samuel George of the George Brewhouse at Dowgate Dock.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, iv, f. 70. The common house of easement at Queenhithe.

<sup>4</sup> *Guildhall Recs.*, Ward presentments, 1680.

<sup>5</sup> *C.L.C. Journal*, 1678-82, pp. 151-2.

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annexed to the . . . patent', and also by the report's note about this area, 'And we further finde the Surveyors papers of the building line to agree with the said Schedule': (*Repert.*, 87, f. 179). Failing further evidence, it must, however, be regarded only as an unproven possibility.

Having perused the Design of the three pair of stairs intended to be erected at the three cranes by Thomas Fitch and having examined his proposition containing Length, Scantlings, Quantity of timber framing piling and all workmanship, we whose names are subscribed are of opinion that the materials and all manner of workmanship, w<sup>th</sup> the piling may reasonably be worth five hundred and ten pounds before the miter work. But if the upper pair of stairs be omitted and a single and Banister at the east pier, i.e. South pier placed in lieu thereof, we conceive one hundred and twenty pounds may be abated of the former summe. —

Dated December 22. 1671

Chas. Wren

Robt. Hooke

70  
410  
950  
126  
114

Upon perusing also of the Design of the stairs to be set up at Blackfriars, consisting of three pair of flying stairs w<sup>th</sup> a Reathpar, the two side stairs being twelve foot long & the front stairs fourteen foot. and having examined his propositions containing Length, Scantlings, Quantity of timber framing piling & all workmanship, we are of opinion that the framing piling piling & all workmanship except finish work may be reasonably worth four hundred & twenty pounds.

Chas. Wren

Robt. Hooke

The Waterfront — reports by Wren and Hooke on new public landing stairs at The Three Cranes and at Blackfriars. The designer and contractor was Thomas Fitch

From the Corporation of London's records

whole matter of compensation for the laying open of ground within the proposed quay. The City's summary of the state of affairs is a perfect illustration of its own attitude, position and dilemma:

'The Citty [it stated] have payd or given Warr<sup>ts</sup> for paym<sup>t</sup> of such persons whose grounds were actually layd into the Streets and for the building of Prisons and Publick places etc out of the fund provided by the Act as farr as they could reasonably foresee the product of it.

'And the chief designe of the Parliament being to advance the trade of this Citty which without the Streets and publick places could not be, The Wharfes being noe way conducing to it And in the Act of 19 Car it being expressly sayd that the payment of the sume of money awarded or adjudged the Proprietors for the Streets shall be a full Authority for the Citty to convert the Ground to the Purposes in the Act, the Committees have forborne to give Warrants for the payment of the Wharfes.

'The Citty did conceive they had Authority to satisfy those things that answer the Ends of the Act in the first place and therefore have discharged them accordingly But the proprietors of the Wharfes finding the funds will not answer their demands say that the Citty have noe preference and therefore doe claime an equall share of the [City's share of the dues] and doe demand Warrants accordingly of the Chamber.

'Some of the Proprietors of the Wharfes have layd open their Grounds others have not, They that have layd them open have heretofore demanded their satisfaction.

'Quer: Whether the Citty be bound to give them Warr<sup>ts</sup> knowing the fund cannot pay it and if they doe how farr the Committee that signe those Warrants are oblidged in their owne persons or how farr the Citty by their Warrant.'<sup>1</sup>

The two counsel to whom the case was submitted were

<sup>1</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 94, f. 297. The counsel concerned were Henry Pollexfen and George Treby, the then recorder of the city. Treby later became Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas.

unhesitating in their opinion that the City was under no obligation to give warrants on demand. If it did give them it would likewise be under no obligation to pay them unless the coal dues provided sufficient funds for this to be done. The longer opinion<sup>1</sup> added that the City could pay all other persons and interests mentioned in the Acts before giving satisfaction for the quay, and that it was obviously reasonable for this course to be taken. The general interest was the restoration of the city and its commerce. This should receive preference, and, until the restoration had been completed, private interests should be left on one side. In addition, since only the free flow of trade could show whether owners of the quay had lost by the restrictions laid upon their land, compensation could not be properly assessed until the city had returned to normal.

This advice was a thorough justification of the course which in all prudence the City had been almost bound to take. In the circumstances it was also a death blow for the quay, and counsel's concluding advice might well be set out for its obituary. 'Perhaps,' he wrote,<sup>2</sup> 'it may be best to let those that are Interested to know that there is not money att present, doubtfull whether ever there will be, if hereafter there shall be, they shall then be taken care of, or if a parliam<sup>t</sup>, that the Citty will Joyne to procure an Act that may give full satisfaction, perhaps such an Answer may give content, if not tis what can be.' The answer can hardly have given content, but it was all that the unfortunate claimants received.<sup>3</sup> As the City had anticipated, the coal duty produced no surplus, and there was no other fund upon which drafts could be made. Yet the quay lingered on as a negative factor long after it had been made clear that no compensation would be forthcoming, and long after its original purposes had ceased to be even remotely possible. The prohibition of buildings survived the abandonment of all thoughts of wharfing out, and, if the maps may be

<sup>1</sup> Treby's, ff. 298 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Pollexfen's, f. 297v.

<sup>3</sup> *C.L.C. Journal*, 1678-82, p. 176v. At least one of the chief claimants, Sir Henry Tulse, was a member of the Lands Committee.



## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

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## FLEET CANAL AND THAMES QUAY

relied upon, its effectiveness was only gradually diminished.<sup>1</sup> As the eighteenth century progressed the open spaces by the waterside slowly became smaller, but even in 1821 the Act was still regarded as sufficiently important for its formal repeal to be justified. In that year a new statute<sup>2</sup> removed the restrictions it had imposed, and the long career of the 'Thames Quay' reached its end.

<sup>1</sup> See Richard Blome's maps in Strype's *Stow*, Roque's map of 1746, and Horwood's of 1799. Mr. Perks is of the opinion that Ogilby and Morgan's great map of 1677 shows what in law should have been the state of affairs and not what was the actual state of the river front: (*The Water-Line* . . . p. 4). The matter cannot be proved, either way, but after careful study I incline to the belief that the map is correct in parts, though not in all. The section from the mouth of the Fleet westwards to the Temple wall, for example, corresponds exactly with a survey dated June 8th, 1716, and reproduced by the Wren Society in their twelfth volume (plate xxix). This is the section in which it is known that alterations were made in 1672-74. The much foreshortened drawings by Thomas Wyck of the famous frost fair in 1684 show an indubitable quay, but they are not accurate enough to provide an unsupported truth.

<sup>2</sup> 1 & 2 George IV, c. 89.

## THE PROGRESS OF REBUILDING

'LONDON rises again, whether with greater speed or greater magnificence is doubtful; three short years complete that which was considered the work of an age.'<sup>1</sup> So speaks the Monument, and speaking lies. Evelyn, honest and reliable, records a more sober truth. Revisiting the burnt area for the first time some three years after the Fire, he spent 'almost the intire day in surveying what progresse was made in rebuilding the ruinous citty', noting that it 'now began a little to revive after its sad calamitie'.<sup>2</sup> All the available facts bear him out. When he walked through the streets few of them had been properly repaved.<sup>3</sup> More than a third of the foundations had still to be staked;<sup>4</sup> not one of the burnt churches had been restored;<sup>5</sup> and City and merchants were still using the makeshift accommodation devised after the Fire. The tale of the years had not been of idleness. Work had been vigorously pressed forward, but it was not within human power to achieve restoration in so short a time. At first it had not even been possible to begin. The earliest moves had perforce been expedients to tide over the effects of the disaster. Arrangements had to be made for

<sup>1</sup> ... resurgit Londinum, majore celeritate an splendore incertum: unum triennium absolvit quod saeculi opus credebatur'.

<sup>2</sup> *Diary*, August 17th, 1669.

<sup>3</sup> This work was in the hands of the newly constituted commissioners of pavements and sewers, whose revenues were obtained from the inhabitants of the areas affected by their work. Failing inhabitants they were powerless, and the City had been forced, on September 14th, 1667, to lend them £500, in order that the important places might be paved. Cartage of building materials soon destroyed this first attempt and nothing more of a general nature was possible until the inhabitants returned. In the winter of 1670-71 the work was done again.

<sup>4</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MSS. 275-7.

<sup>5</sup> St. Sepulchre's, which had been only partially damaged, had been much restored, but was to receive further attention later.

## THE PROGRESS OF REBUILDING

markets, water supplies, courts, prisons and the needs of government. Refugees had to be accommodated, goods salvaged and the threads of trade rewoven. These all took time, giving to City and dispossessed alike as much as they could manage. It was only gradually that they were able to restore a life which if far from normal could yet function without undue difficulty. Rebuilding had to wait while the City was accommodated, while the people of the suburbs and the unburnt areas closed in to provide room for as many of the refugees as possible, and while homes were found for the rest in sheds and houses built for the occasion on the open spaces round the city wall.<sup>1</sup> For a time, too, nothing more was possible. Replanning could not be devised in a day, and whilst the authorities debated the people could only suffer and wait. Their only alternative, escape by migration, offered little scope to the majority. Fears of it were the constant attendants of the planners, but, as an extreme step, it was necessarily barred to most. Some did take it. A number of the poorer families were attracted by the East India Company to St. Helena.<sup>2</sup> Some of the merchants moved to Liverpool and built up a flourishing trade with America.<sup>3</sup> But the majority had to remain, waiting until the work of restoration could begin. In the interval they did their best to prepare. Faced with a housing shortage so acute that it was proposed in the Commons that Papists, sectaries and foreigners should be compelled to remove ten miles from the city in order to leave more room for the refugees,<sup>4</sup> landlord and tenant began

<sup>1</sup> This had been authorized on September 8th, and before the end of November those who had set up in lower Moorfields were petitioning for leave to make a turnpike road to improve the access for wheeled traffic. Those put up on the City's property paid ground rents, which in the five years to September 1st, 1671, yielded £4193 19s. od. (*Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 361).

<sup>2</sup> Philip Gosse, *St. Helena, 1502-1938* (1938), p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> See the petition to Parliament from the Liverpool Corporation (1698) reproduced in the *Liverpool Vestry Books*, ed. H. Peet (Liverpool, 1912), I, p. 410. Some of the activities of Allan Smith, 'a great sugar baker of London' who transferred his activities to Liverpool, may be traced in the *Moore Rental*, ed. T. Heywood, Chetham Soc. (Liverpool, 1847), XII, pp. 76-7, and in F. N. Macnamara, *Memorials of the Danvers Family* (1895), pp. 448 *et seq.* This information I owe to the great kindness of Mr. Robert Gladstone of Liverpool.

<sup>4</sup> Milward's *Diary*, op. cit., p. 4.

their negotiations for rebuilding. All round the city, meetings were held to make ready for the day when work could go forward. The early records of the Fire Court, and the foundation books, bear dry witness to this activity and to the disputes it engendered. The records of the various corporate bodies are more human, showing the spirit as well as the achievements of the dispossessed citizens. To a disinterested observer there is an element of unconscious greatness about it all. The hurriedly written minutes reflect a community determined that its life should continue in spite of every effect of disaster. Jealous of the forms and ceremonies in which that life had been clothed, clinging to them as a symbol of a continuity threatened with destruction, the writers are revealed during the months of writing as doing their best to maintain the past as a pledge to the future. City and Companies, vestries and boards of governors, meeting under the shadow of the same disaster, sought unanimously to solve its problems by restoration and not by resignation. Wards and precincts, companies and parishes, kept their machinery in being, carried out their duties, and prepared the way for the life which was to flow back into old channels made new.<sup>1</sup> Officers were chosen, though the electors had to walk miles to do so. One parish held its meeting in the ruins of its former vestry, another beat the bounds as though the houses still stood. They were typical. Inside and outside the walls, the dispossessed made ready for the completion of the statute which would authorize the rebuilding for which they prayed.

The City led the way. Lack of funds, scarcity of labour,

<sup>1</sup> It is not intended to suggest that the machinery worked as usual. Changes had to be made in order to adapt it to the new conditions. The juries for the Mayor's and the Sheriffs' courts, for example, could no longer be drawn from the twelve divisions which had formerly provided them, but had to be 'taken and summoned indifferently out of the body of the City remaining' (*Jor.*, 46, f. 142), whilst the parishes had to make various changes of personnel. St. Thomas Apostle's had to elect new trustees, four of the old ones having been 'dispersed into diverse pishes & not att p[re]sent intending to inhabit in' their old one: (*Vestry Minutes, Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 663, f. 18). At St. Swithin's, London Stone, the same churchwardens served for several years, and in all cases there was apt to be a shortage of people able to serve. But the institutions remained, if the customs were varied.

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and scarcity of materials limited its programme so that temporary measures had to be taken wherever possible. Newgate gaol was patched up, the unburnt gates converted into temporary prisons, and makeshift court-rooms established in the ruins of the Guildhall and the Sessions House. But in November, months before the last embers of the Fire were extinguished,<sup>1</sup> the first part of the restoration of the Guildhall had been authorized, and the Aldermen were considering Sir Robert Vynor's proposals for rebuilding the Exchange.<sup>2</sup> Plans for the latter were prepared with all speed, initial funds were provided, and by March 25th a committee 'sat dayly' in that most public of places, the long gallery in Gresham College, 'to entertaine all maner of work men that will sett their hand and skill towards [its] rebuilding'.<sup>3</sup> The example was impressive, and all the more so because it was common knowledge that the City was likely to choose the more splendid of the models submitted for the new building.

The completion of the statute and the supplementary negotiations between Council and City allowed the public to follow the latter's example and to begin rebuilding. The opening was not auspicious. Hampered by the war, held up by lack of materials, jeopardized by disputes between the parties, progress was disappointingly slow. The sound of Dutch guns in the Medway, and the departure of craftsmen to hurry forward eleventh-hour fortifications at Tilbury, were not the best background to restoration, and the citizens very naturally held back. If such special obstacles had lasted long, their effect might have been serious, but the Treaty of Breda brought relief before the danger had gone too far. The Dutch capers were withdrawn, and the Thames reopened. Sufficient supplies of coals, timber and stone were brought in to avert a winter famine and some progress was made with the rebuilding before the weather curtailed operations. The months of delay had

<sup>1</sup> *Mercurius Politicus Redivivus* noted that cellars were still burning on January 24th, 1667, and Pepys that this was still the case some six weeks later.

<sup>2</sup> A committee was appointed on November 20th to hear them: (*Reperit.*, 72, f. 12).

<sup>3</sup> *Mercurius Politicus Redivivus*, p. 668.

allowed the Fire Court to impress upon disputants that they would gain nothing by intransigence, and country craftsmen had had time to arrive in numbers sufficient to compel their London brethren to relax their restrictions.<sup>1</sup> Such gains, though imponderable, must yet be remembered. Even so, the first anniversary of the Fire could hardly be celebrated with rejoicings over the advance of recovery, and it was not until the spring of 1668 that activity could be called general. That year marked the real beginnings of revival. Labour and materials were both available. The repayment of money lent to the King provided capital,<sup>2</sup> and the renewal of leases, which was an outstanding feature of the year, at once marked and encouraged the return of confidence. The Companies were generally known to be busying themselves with plans for new halls, payments for staked ground had begun, and the oppressive lifelessness of the unbuilt ruins was for the first time mitigated by the bustle of revival. Only the question of the churches remained to be decided, and, considering the work on hand, realists may well have rejoiced that the prorogation of Parliament had again deferred that particular settlement.<sup>3</sup>

The City's own programme<sup>4</sup> has already been touched on, and may therefore be summarized and dismissed. Surpassing all others in total, it was affected by factors peculiar to itself, so that its progress gives few clues to that of the whole com-

<sup>1</sup> The Tylers and Bricklayers had made one concession in advance, laying down on November 19th, 1666, that for the next three years each member could take one more apprentice. On November 5th, 1667, they noted that country bricklayers, who could take as many apprentices as they wished, were engrossing much of the work which the freemen could do if they had more of them. They therefore allowed each man one more: (*Court Minutes, Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 3043, III, pp. 31-2, 58-9).

<sup>2</sup> The Crown had borrowed, through the agency of the City, £50,000, in 1663, on the security of two of the four subsidies then voted by Parliament, and £200,000, in 1664, on the security of the Hearth Money. In November 1668 Backwell paid £77,409, the principal and interest then outstanding on these loans, taking over the securities for them. The lenders thus obtained immediate repayment, and Backwell made his own arrangements for collecting on their assignments.

<sup>3</sup> Parliament was adjourned on May 9th, 1668, when the second rebuilding Act had reached the committee stage in the House of Lords.

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this paragraph arrangements with the tenants of its estates have not been included. As the City left them to do the rebuilding they fall into the category of private rebuilding. Markets, stairs, and paving have been dealt with later.

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munity. The capital cost of each building in relation to the income received therefrom was out of all proportion to the ratio in private rebuilding. This could not be shared with tenants, and whereas a citizen who decided to bear the whole cost himself might hope to receive twelve per cent or more on his outlay if he let at a rack rent, or a large immediate return by way of a fine if he leased beneficially, the City received no direct return on most of its buildings. It had no reserves to invest and, as it did not seek to borrow wholesale, was compelled to spread its work over a full decade. This saved an undue strain on the supplies of capital, labour and materials available for the whole community, and, thanks to the coal dues, the ultimate cost was not left as an intolerable mortgage on the future. Work in the early years was confined to the Guildhall and the Sessions House. The former, as was fitting, was the first to be started. Saving St. Paul's and the Exchange, it was the most costly of all the new buildings, and its construction served both as a signal and as an encouragement to the citizens. An act of faith as well as of necessity, work on its main fabric was hurried forward with all speed. As early as December 1667 Pepys noted how swiftly it was rising.<sup>1</sup> In May 1669 the outside was almost finished,<sup>2</sup> and in November 1671 inside and outside had been carried so near to completion that it was again possible to use it for the elaborate ceremonies of the Lord Mayor's feast.<sup>3</sup> At Evelyn's visit, it had been the only building besides the Sessions House which the City had begun. By November 1671 the two Compters and Ludgate were almost completed, Newgate was well under way, and the rebuilding of Bridewell was being mooted. Three years later, only Bridewell and the Monument were uncompleted.

The progress of other building is harder to estimate. General numerical conclusions are possible, but figures of houses constructed are not reliable guides to the restoration of

<sup>1</sup> *Diary*, December 19th.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, May 7th.

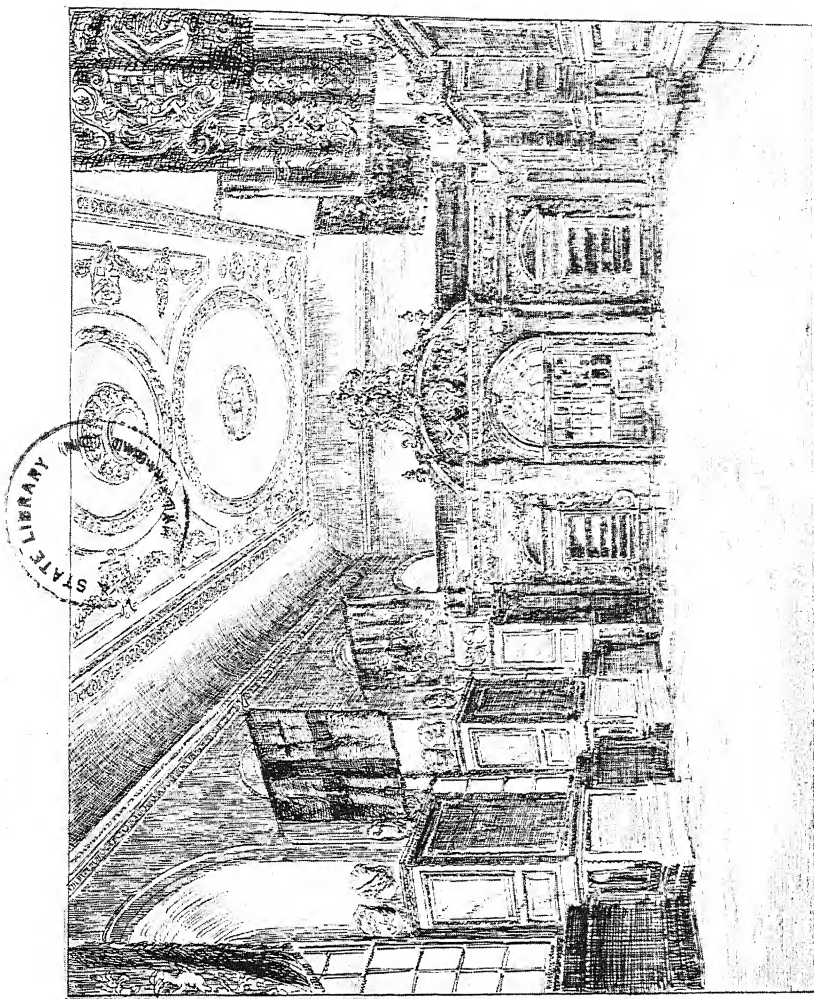
<sup>3</sup> *Repert.*, 76, f. 245. The building was then described as 'being most rebuilt and fitted for that purpose'.



the life and balance of a community. An analysis of progress under the broad heads of Companies, institutions and private persons is more valuable. A severer task, it can be carried far enough to show the factors of major importance and the chief stages in the recovery. The companies are the most interesting.<sup>1</sup> A foreigner noting their role in the ceremonies and government of the city would in 1666 have called them its heart and soul. In reality they were meeting with difficulty problems as great as those which then faced the City. The uneasy courses of the first two Stuarts had been a trial for them, the war and the interregnum an unbroken tribulation. Suburban competition played an important part. The short-lived attacks of the yeomanry, and the more prolonged struggle for and against control of trades by their nominal companies, brought additional difficulties, but taxation had surpassed all else in the troubles it had caused. Resources depleted by earlier demands were strained to breaking point by successive loans exacted in the years 1640-43 — in 1640 £50,000 for the King; in 1642 £100,000 for the Parliament; and in 1643 £50,000 for the defence of London. Compliance with these demands brought many into conflict with recalcitrant members, and most to sales of plate and borrowings on their common seals. Less than a quarter of the total principal was repaid to them,<sup>2</sup> and nothing seems to have been received on account of interest. At eight per cent the latter mounted swiftly and without remedy. The Goldsmiths, whose quota was 7 per cent of the total, calculated in November 1652 that they were still owed £11,990 16s. 8d. of the principal and £10,529 13s. od. for interest on it. The Grocers and the Drapers, whose quotas had been higher, were correspondingly worse off, and others were affected in proportion. Minor repayments in the next

<sup>1</sup> This section is mainly based on histories, memorials and documents of the Companies which have been printed. A list will be found in the bibliography. Where a manuscript source has been used, it is indicated. Other references have only been given in the case of quotations.

<sup>2</sup> A number of the histories of the individual Companies state that nothing was repaid. I have not been able to verify this from the actual records, but it is most unlikely that they were not paid back the same fractional instalments as their fellows.



Stationers' Hall, by Ludgate Hill  
From a drawing by Hanslip Fletcher

## THE PROGRESS OF REBUILDING

three years did little to improve matters. The great mass of the debt was and remained unpaid.<sup>1</sup>

The results may easily be imagined. The Companies were not poor, but much of their apparent wealth was illusory. Their property was commonly the security for charitable benefactions of which they were the trustees, and they depended for the bulk of their income upon their members. Their corporate property was insufficient to meet repeated demands for loans, and was not expected to do so.<sup>2</sup> But, when members refused to participate, corporate property had to be mortgaged to make good the deficiency. Some suffered worse than others, but none escaped.<sup>3</sup> The Barber-surgeons, with a court of thirty-three and a livery of seventy-three, had to find £1600 for the three loans combined. Already in difficulties, the result was to increase their corporate debt to £2633. The great Companies were equally hit, the Haberdashers calculating in 1673 that in principal and interest the loans had cost them £50,000. Further loans on such a scale could not have been provided, and were not demanded, but throughout the civil war and the interregnum taxes were multiplied without respite.<sup>4</sup> Efforts to evade citizenship increased, and the drift to the suburbs was accelerated. Office in the Companies became a hardship, membership a disadvantage. Both were avoided, and their position and resources suffered accordingly.

The Restoration brought greater security, but fresh demands. Entertainments and festivities were welcome evidence of the new order, but the Companies, footing many of the bills, liked them less than most. Besides festivities, they were called

<sup>1</sup> There is an admirable summary of the amounts raised by, and the repayments made to, the Mercers' Company in the *Commons' Journals*, xxv, pp. 539b-541, 546-7.

<sup>2</sup> Loans raised through the agency of the City could be collected in various ways. If they were obtained through the machinery of the Companies, each Company was responsible for its quota. This it raised as it wished, usually either by assessing its members or by inviting their subscriptions.

<sup>3</sup> Besides individual histories, the calendar of the papers of the 'Committee for Advance of Money', 1642-56, has interesting details.

<sup>4</sup> There is an excellent list of various taxes and minor loans for the period from August 1641 to August 1650 in the Rev. A. H. Johnson's *History of the Drapers' Company of London*, iv, appendix xxii.

upon for gifts. The £12,000 with which the City greeted the royal brothers derived entirely from them, and most of the loyalty behind the *Loyal London* was also theirs.<sup>1</sup> This last burden, coming when enthusiasm for the Restoration had grown dim, brought murmurings and downright refusals. The full quotas were not raised and the City Chamber itself had to bear a part of the cost. While the matter was still under discussion the Fire created new difficulties. To Herbert, writing in 1837 of the twelve great Companies, it was 'the consummation of their miseries', the end of twenty-six years of 'intolerable exaction, spoliation, and calamity'.<sup>2</sup> The description is just. It was the misery of miseries, and yet it was not a *coup de grâce*. The trials of the preceding years, the destruction of much of their property, the loss of all save a handful of their halls, were not enough to break down the stored vitality of centuries. The Companies' grasp upon industry may have been relaxing, but their grasp upon life was undiminished. A very, very few seem to have accepted the destruction and left their halls unbuilt:<sup>3</sup> the majority put their affairs in order, appealed to their members, and built afresh at the earliest possible moment.

For most of them, rebuilding was a matter of raising the necessary money. The Turners<sup>4</sup> and the Blacksmiths<sup>5</sup> had to negotiate with landlords for new terms, the Drapers and others with neighbours for the adjustment of their respective boundaries, but most were free to begin directly they could provide sufficient funds. Finance governed the date and the period of

<sup>1</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 289. £10,000 was given to Charles and £1000 each to the dukes of York and Gloucester. The *Loyal London* was given and built by the city to replace the *London* which blew up in 1665, just after the declaration of war against the Dutch. The Plague hindered subscriptions, and the Fire destroyed the last chance of the full amount being raised by such means.

<sup>2</sup> W. Herbert, *The Twelve Great Livery Companies of London* (1836-37), I, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the Bowyers and the Poulterers. Both before and after the Fire there were Companies which rented the use of halls belonging to others.

<sup>4</sup> Court Minutes under August 28th, 1667 (*Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 3295, ii). H. A. Harben suggests that the hall was rebuilt on a new site on College Hill (*A Dictionary of London* (1918), p. 595), but it is clear from this MS. that there was no change.

<sup>5</sup> The Company's account book, p. 287: (*Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 2883, v).

their rebuilding, and finance was their weakest spot. Already in straits, it was on this account that the Fire might have been expected to cripple them, and this in many cases, it did, though never beyond recovery. The extent to which each was affected varied. Much depended on the state of their fortunes before the catastrophe, whilst luck and the caprice of the flames also played important parts. The Drapers were amongst the more fortunate. The £1000 they had just spent on the embellishment of their hall and garden was lost, but an appreciable part of their landed property was spared, and they were the happy possessors of large sums<sup>1</sup> either uninvested or placed in loans whose security was not affected by the Fire. By contrast, the Goldsmiths were left with unburnt rents of only £231 15s. od., against annual interest payments of £715. Property worth over £1000 per annum in beneficial rents had been destroyed, whilst the debts contracted during the years of trouble remained undischarged and unsecured. The Girdlers and the Cutlers are another example. Both Companies lost their halls, but whereas that of the former was ruinous and worth not more than £40 a year, the latter's had just been rebuilt at a cost of over £2700.<sup>2</sup> Yet no plight was so bad as the Grocers'. Desperately in debt before the Fire, their hopes of solvency had been pinned on receipts from leases which were then falling due for renewal. The Fire took away this their last asset, leaving the Company with a debt of over £20,000 and no resources save its members. All expedients failed and for eight years, from 1672 to 1679, creditors occupied the patched-up remains of their hall. Harassed with all the devices known to that litigious age they sought in the wilderness for means to repair their broken fortunes.<sup>3</sup> In 1680 the proceeds of divers shifts enabled them to return, but five reigns were to pass before they could toast a return of prosperity.

<sup>1</sup> Apparently trust funds.

<sup>2</sup> The last of the bills for the work had been paid some three months before the Fire.

<sup>3</sup> See the accounts given of their position and the proceedings of some of their creditors in the *Ninth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission*, part II, pp. 21b-23a, 41a.

## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

Though degrees of misfortune varied, there could be little variation in the methods adopted to meet it. A random sample covering nineteen of the Companies<sup>1</sup> shows that most sold plate, borrowed on mortgage, collected contributions from their members, and appealed successfully for a general increase of the livery. The proportions contributed by these expedients, and the amounts spent on each new hall defy classification. The Parish Clerks obtained a hall sufficient for their needs at a cost of only £400:<sup>2</sup> the Drapers' Company laid out £13,000. Subscriptions for the Barber-Surgeons' rebuilding produced £1850 towards a total cost of £4292: the Blacksmiths obtained £51 out of £2100.<sup>3</sup> Some Companies asked only for freewill offerings, or contented themselves with sending round collectors: others made general levies, the Painter-stainers from their liverymen, the Merchant Taylors from freemen as well. Many mortgaged lands or the new-built halls themselves. The Goldsmiths obtained loans from their members free of interest. The Plumbers covered their needs with a single loan of £600 from the King's plumber, Sergeant Peter Brent.<sup>4</sup> The Girdlers, amongst other measures, sold an annuity. The most afflicted were forced beyond loans into actual sales. The stricken Merchant Taylors raised a sorrowful £5000 by selling land in Lombard Street and Cornhill which they had 'esteemed as the richest Jewel of their Estate'.<sup>5</sup> The Joiners and the Turners did the same, though their sacrifices were less severe. In a sense every one of these methods was restorative rather than constructive, but the last of the devices used, an increase in the numbers of liverymen, is not open to this criticism. A tendency to restrict the livery, though general, was rarely in the best interests of the Companies, and it seems reasonable to assume that the troubled years had caused the numbers to drop un-

<sup>1</sup> 44 halls are mentioned by Mr. W. G. Bell as having been burnt (op. cit., p. 338). 41 appear to have been rebuilt.

<sup>2</sup> Exclusive of some £200 spent on enlarging the site.

<sup>3</sup> *Accounts*, MS. cit., *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> *Court Minutes*, MS. cit. (no folio). He was master of the Company two years later.

<sup>5</sup> C. M. Clode, *Memorials of the Guild of Merchant Taylors* (1875), p. 21.

## THE PROGRESS OF REBUILDING

usually low. If this is correct, the expansion after the Fire was of value in more senses than one. It was freely and successfully utilized. The Cutlers increased their fee to £10 and exhorted all to accept the livery for the benefit of the new hall. The Pewterers raised no less than £800 from such fees, and in most cases the response seems to have been good. In a back-handed way it also served to increase the Companies' revenues from other sources. In nine years, from 1667 to 1676, the Blacksmiths received £480 and £648 in fines of £4 and £12 to escape the stewardship of the dinners given respectively to the yeomanry and on Lord Mayor's Day.<sup>1</sup> Such windfalls, denied to the private builder, were a very welcome aid to hard-pressed Companies.

The date at which each Company could start its rebuilding depended on the success of the methods described. The extreme limits were wide. Generalization is difficult, but if halls alone are taken into account, it may safely be said that in 1669 and 1670 activity was general, and that by 1672 it was almost over.<sup>2</sup> The more fortunate in our sample had been able to begin in 1668, the least fortunate had to wait for fifteen years. The hall, however, was only a beginning. As the centre of the Companies' activities it had to be given priority, but much remained to be done after it had been completed. Court rooms and parlours were added as funds became available, and the process of embellishment continued for many years after the actual buildings had been finished. Coopers' Hall will serve as an example. It was usable in 1670, but the whole undertaking was not brought to an end until 1678. The record of the Drapers is similar — the bulk of the work being over by 1671, and the whole not until 1678. These Companies built more or less continuously, but the Merchant Taylors had a definite break. Their hall was ready in 1673, but they were

<sup>1</sup> *Account Book*, MS. cit., *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'rebuilding' is often used rather vaguely in the histories of the Companies, and it is not always clear whether it refers to the whole process or only to its beginning. Harben gives some dates, but as he had frequently to work on very meagre data, they are not reliable.

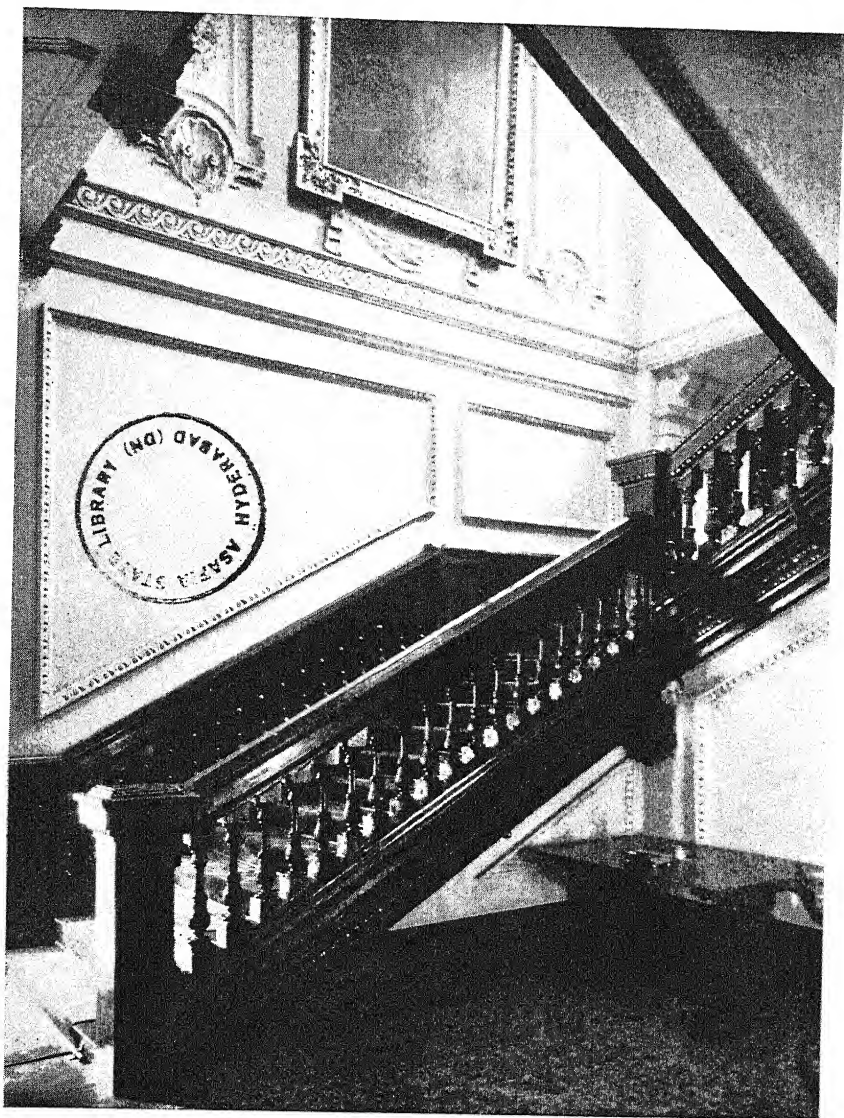


not in a position to add the court rooms until 1681-83. In general it was a matter of money, and the historian of the Goldsmiths might have been speaking for all when he wrote that 'the work was spread over a considerable time, [being] executed little by little as funds permitted'.<sup>1</sup> The work of embellishment knew no limits of time. Riches of glass and woodwork were added by general subscription or as the gifts of individual members. Wainscoting and carving figure with plate and money in the lists of contemporary benefactions. The process is timeless, continuing to-day as it continued then. Yet, in general, one can say that by 1685 the Companies were housed in all their old state. The generosity of their members, and the services of that great volume of private capital which the flames had been powerless to touch, had rescued and restored them. But it was often a state of merely outward splendour, resting on heavy liabilities and maintained with difficulty. For years to come, payments of principal and interest were to take the bulk of revenues still suffering from the effects of the Fire. Half the eighteenth century was to pass before the fortunes of the Grocers or the Goldsmiths were fully restored. Then, when building leases granted after the Fire had fallen in, they came once again into their own. The 1740s began to make reparation for the troubles of a hundred years before, and the 'year of victories' could more justly be celebrated than the year of Restoration. By then the London they had helped to restore had come in turn to restore them. Its steady rise had silently enhanced the value of their properties, swelling their shrunken revenues and freeing them from their burden of debt. A world centre, it rewarded its citizens and its institutions with a share in its own prosperity. For the Companies this period marked the beginning of their greatest wealth. Ironically it had come at the moment when their original function in London's industry was, or seemed to be, about to perish.

The abundant private wealth which had helped to restore the Companies to their halls, helped also in the restoration of

<sup>1</sup> W. S. Prideaux, *Memorials of the Goldsmiths' Company* (1896-97), II, p. 166.





The staircase, Skinners' Hall, Dowgate Hill

the second category of rebuilding, the 'Institutions'. This term, designedly vague, is used here to cover a variety of bodies. Christ's Hospital, Doctors' Commons, Sion College, Blackwell Hall, the College of Arms,<sup>1</sup> the Royal Exchange and the Custom House have all been included, since between them they illustrate the many-sided activities that the Fire had damaged. Perhaps London Bridge ought also to have been included, but, since the damage to the actual bridge was so slight that it was for many years left unrepaired,<sup>2</sup> it seems better to omit it and to include its burnt tenants in their proper place under private rebuilding. Of those chosen, Christ's Hospital and Sion College are admirable illustrations of the power of private benefactions. The Hospital<sup>3</sup> had suffered grievous losses in the Fire. It lay inside the burnt area, and its buildings, with bedding, apparel, furniture and household utensils — 'more then can be reedifyed and repaired for £8000' — were destroyed. Much of its property in London suffered the same fate, and its children were not only left homeless, but also in danger for the future. Their very maintenance was imperilled by the 'great decay of their revenue by many houses consumed and other losses occasioned by the . . . fire'.<sup>4</sup> No funds had to be found to rebuild the ordinary houses, for the Hospital could offer its tenants rebuilding leases, recouping them for their

<sup>1</sup> Often referred to as the Heralds' College.

<sup>2</sup> The description in Strype's *Stow* (bk. I, p. 55) is misleading. In September 1667 the bridge was carefully examined, and it was reported that the parts affected by the Fire could be rebuilt for £2070 or repaired for £1670. One defective arch accounted for most of the cost, and, as its rebuilding had been under consideration in 1665, it is clear that the defect was older than the Fire. Very little was done until 1678 when another examination showed that arches 17-19 (from the south shore) 'for want of being built over and for want of stone worke being made good', needed immediate attention. The matter seems to have been taken in hand in 1683, and the houses were rebuilt, their rents appearing in the accounts in 1684: (*Journals of the Bridge House Committee*, II, pp. 14-15, 163; *Order Book*, pp. 209-10, 230, 232; *Rentals* for 1683-85; picture of London Bridge and the Frozen Thames by Hondius in the London Museum).

<sup>3</sup> This account is based on Rev. W. Trollope, *A History of the Royal Foundation of Christ's Hospital* (1834); E. H. Pearce, *Annals of Christ's Hospital* (1908), and the extracts from the records of the hospital printed in the eleventh volume of the Wren Society (Oxford, 1934). As the dates on which the buildings were begun are rarely clear, those given in Pearce have been used throughout.

<sup>4</sup> *Reperit.*, 73, f. 191.

outlay by extending their tenancies. But the consequent reduction in revenue made it doubly difficult both to keep the children and to restore the Hospital itself. Temporary relief for the former was obtained by a grant of £500 from the national subscription,<sup>1</sup> but this was only a palliative. Money had to be found to rebuild, if the Hospital was to continue to function. The majority of the children had been evacuated to Hertford and Ware, and, without schooling or corporate discipline, were no better than the parish foundlings so often lodged in those towns. Appeals were made, and private charity was soon forthcoming. In March 1667 it was possible to begin work on the reparable parts of the ruins, and in a few months this had advanced far enough to allow some of the children to be brought back. It was a small beginning, and there was little that was fit to be restored, but during the next thirty years benefactor after benefactor came forward to build the remainder afresh. Erasmus Smith played a leading part. A far-seeing and generous supporter, he seems to have been the moving spirit behind most of the earlier reconstruction. In the summer of 1668 he bore much of the cost of a new Counting House and Court Room. In 1671-72 he provided the bulk of the funds for new school buildings, and two years later for sufficient new wards to make it possible for the children from the country to return. This allowed the Hospital to fulfil its functions, though in a cramped and uncomfortable manner, and there was a gap of some years before the next move. Then, in 1680, Sir John Frederick rebuilt the hall at a cost, according to Trollope, of £5000, and in 1682 Sir Robert Clayton spent twice that sum on a new south front. Finally, in 1694-95, Sir John Moore added a writing school, a gift representing over £4000.

<sup>1</sup> October 10th, 1666, was proclaimed by the King as a general fast day for the calamity of the Fire, and collections were ordered to be taken in all churches and chapels for the relief of the sufferers. The yield, including gifts made privately, barely exceeded £16,250, and the Londoners were bitterly disappointed, freely alleging embezzlement by the collectors. This may have occurred in some cases, but it is more probable that plague, still rife in the provinces, was the chief cause. The receipts and distribution of the money are recorded in MSS. 271, 274 and 296 in the Guildhall Library. The grant to Christ's Hospital was made on June 19th, 1668.

The Hospital was thus restored to better and more commodious buildings than those which had been destroyed. Its work had suffered interference, but had never broken down, and by 1674 the numbers housed on the old site had returned to normal. This, in a time of general suffering, was an achievement to be proud of, even though it might be urged that the Hospital's position was abnormal. A popular institution, with the advantage of the City for its governor, it might have been expected to lead the way. The Aldermen, usually rich men, were brought into close contact with it and gave it their generous support. Three of the benefactors mentioned had held the mayoralty — Sir John Frederick in 1661-62, Sir Robert Clayton, the great scrivener of Morris and Clayton, in 1679-80, and Sir John Moore in 1681-82. Sir John Smith and Sir William Peake, who also contributed, had been respectively Sheriff in 1669-70 and Mayor in 1667-68, and only Erasmus Smith seems to have been outside the circle. Such men could afford unusual support to a favourite charity, and the fact that their benefactions exceeded £20,000 testifies both to their generosity and to the way in which private wealth had escaped the Fire.

Other institutions, supported by less favoured governors, might well have fared worse, yet they do not seem to have begged in vain. Sion College, barely a generation old, and of interest to few besides the London clergy, was rebuilt even sooner than the Hospital. A 'fair Building of smoothed Brick, with a large Library of the same,'<sup>1</sup> it served divines and ministers beneficed in London as a place for meetings and study. Regular students were housed in chambers designed for their use, and, perhaps to remind them of their Christian duty, the foundation was completed by almshouses for twenty poor people. The whole place, then worth £4000, was destroyed in the Fire, and with it a full third of the books.

<sup>1</sup> Strype's *Stow*, bk. I, p. 146. The account given there is less accurate than that of the college's 'Library-Keeper', W. Reading (*The History . . . of Sion College* (1724)), who included in his story an ingenious plea for the increase of his own stipend. The building of the Hall is described in E. H. Pearce, *Sion College and Library* (Cambridge, 1913).

The alms-people were left homeless, the property of the college burnt, and its endowments reduced to the slender proceeds of the extra-London lands. It was a parlous position, and yet, 'by the strenuous efforts and liberal contributions of the then Fellows, the College and Library were rebuilt',<sup>1</sup> the latter before the end of 1670. The chambers were let on building leases, and £3300 spent on restoring the remainder. £300 in all came from six men with great names in the city — Sir John Shaw, Sir John Wolstenholm, Sir Robert Vyner, Sir Edmund Turner, and Backwell and Francis Millington, the holders of the 'Great Farm' of the customs. Griffith Owen, citizen and brewer, gave £100 and, despite their own difficulties, many of the London divines sent contributions. Others gave desks and books for the new library, Daniel Mills, rector of the unburnt church of St. Olave's, Hart Street, marking his presidential year (1670) in this way. The donors were generous and their purpose was achieved, though there was nothing to spare, and the work was always hampered by lack of funds. In 1678 even the hall was finished, and the College thus enabled to function again in its normal manner, although, like the Companies, its position remained straitened. The contributions had not covered the cost of rebuilding, and mortgage interest had to be met out of revenues reduced by the reduction of the London rent-roll. By 1714 the debt had increased to £900, and years were to pass before it was finally extinguished. Nevertheless 'the work was great and it had prevailed'. There may have been scarcity behind the walls, but they were walls, and not ruins of the past.

The Custom House, like the Augmentations Office in the Temple,<sup>2</sup> was the concern of the Crown, but its importance to the functioning of London may be assessed from the special mention made of it in the declaration of September 13th, 1666. Charles and the City were both anxious that it should be rebuilt as soon as possible, the former fearing for his revenue, the latter for the preservation of its trading community.

<sup>1</sup> *Sion College*, anon. (1859), p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Rebuilt before February 1668.

Temporary offices, far removed from the waterside, were inconvenient to the merchants and to the customs officers, and sustained inconvenience might lead to the diversion or even to the much-dreaded migration of trade. King, City and merchants were therefore agreed on the necessity for speed, and plans for the new buildings were ordered as early as February 1667.<sup>1</sup> Then came delays, and two years elapsed before a warrant was issued for their construction. Once begun, progress was reasonably swift. The last warrant for payment was issued in July 1671, and it seems probable that the premises were completed some little time earlier.<sup>2</sup> Economy had dictated that the furnishing should be utilitarian, but, if the officers refrained from using the permission given to them to install extras at their own expense, the exterior had given Wren an opportunity to beautify the aspect of London from the river. Unless Temple Bar was really of his design, it was the first of his buildings to grace the new city.

Blackwell Hall, which was restored to use during the same year, illustrates the survival into the last half of the seventeenth century of methods and machinery typical of the medieval town. London's wholesale trade in woollen cloth was still compulsorily regulated through halls, or markets, of which it was one.<sup>3</sup> All such cloth wrought in England and brought to the city had to be entered and to pay duty at one or other of the appointed halls, and the trade was strictly confined to freemen. In Strype's words, the regulation aimed at preventing 'corrupt and deceitful Bargains and Contracts', at ensuring that 'good Wares might be bought and sold' and at stopping 'foreign buying and selling in other markets'.<sup>4</sup> By 1660 pre-contracts between freemen and clothiers were recognized, and the system served mainly to preserve a profitable monopoly for the citizens and a revenue from the duties paid. The latter had been

<sup>1</sup> A well annotated account in vol. xv of the London County Council's *Survey of London: All Hallows, Barking*, part II (1934), gives a description of the rebuilding. Wren's work stood for forty seven years, before another fire destroyed it.

<sup>2</sup> Evelyn went to see it, newly rebuilt, on August 22nd, 1671.

<sup>3</sup> The others were Leadenhall and the Welch Hall.

<sup>4</sup> Strype's *Stow*, bk. V, p. 276.

granted to Christ's Hospital, forming a valued part of its endowment. The destruction of the Hall and the Welch Hall, its subsidiary, threatened the Hospital's revenues and compelled it to face a new problem of rebuilding. For a time it could do nothing, but directly the opportunity arose, the matter was vigorously tackled. The old hall had been valued at only £3000<sup>1</sup> and had been too small for the people using it. Many buyers had preferred the greater elbow room of the streets outside to the cramped inconvenience of the market, and had carried on their negotiations in the open air. The Hospital therefore borrowed money, took in adjacent land, and rebuilt on a larger scale. The new hall was ready by October 1670,<sup>2</sup> and space was available for all its users. The streets were relieved, and the children assured of their revenues, but the cost had been heavy and the Hospital cast about for some means of reducing the burden. The City was approached, and the matter referred to the Lands Committee. The latter held with reason that the venture had been bravely done and that, as it had served as an encouragement to the citizens, ensured the hall's continuance as a place of trade, and provided improved facilities, the cost ought to fall on the coal dues. A resolution was therefore passed instructing the Chamberlain to repay the Hospital and to take such advice as he might think fit to regularize the payment.<sup>3</sup> This he did, and, though the calls on the duty prevented immediate payment, the Hospital received £4360 in March and June of 1673, and £6000, the balance, in 1678.<sup>4</sup>

Doctors' Commons provided a very different record.<sup>5</sup> Occupying a large site in the angle between Great Knight rider Street and St. Bennet's Hill, it belonged to the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, who had leased it in 1567 to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, with the condition that the buildings should

<sup>1</sup> Stype's *Stow*, bk. I, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> B.M., Proclamations 21 h 5 (46).

<sup>3</sup> *C.L.C. Journal*, 1672-74, pp. 13-14.

<sup>4</sup> *Coal Duty Account Books* under March 10th, 1673, June 7th, 1673, and January 14th, 1678.

<sup>5</sup> See the account given by Pretor W. Chandler, Miss Edith A. Pickard, and Miss E. Jeffries Davis in vol. xv of the *London Topographical Record* (1931).

be restored for the use of the Advocates and Proctors of the Court of Arches, then held in the church of St. Mary le Bow. This was duly done, and the Doctors moved in, to live under a landlord with whom they had many ties and many disputes. After the Fire they migrated to Exeter House, Strand, showing no desire either to return into the city or to assume the obligations imposed by their lease. There is little doubt that they saw in the catastrophe an opportunity to follow the general westward trend of the departments of government and at the same time to escape from the liabilities to office and taxation which had long been a matter for controversy between the City and themselves. The City was not so minded. The colony of Doctors and the working of the Court of Arches brought good business in its train and helped the livelihood of a whole neighbourhood. Migration would have been deplored at any time, and in 1669 it would have been a dangerous example as well as a serious loss. This could not be tolerated, and the City set out to prevent it. In June 1669 they petitioned the King and obtained the appointment of a committee of the Privy Council to deal with the matter. This body sought to reconcile the various parties, apparently without success, for in June 1670 Trinity Hall sued their landlords and their tenants before the Fire Court, seeking an order for both to contribute towards the cost of rebuilding.<sup>1</sup> The Doctors, summoned before rivals for whom they had no love, attempted in vain to divest themselves of a burden they could well afford to bear. Their intransigence and the complications arising from the leasing of chambers to individual doctors delayed the issue for a time, but on December 15th, 1670, it was finally settled on terms which were fair to all parties. The Doctors were obliged to rebuild and to pay their old rent, but received a lease extended by 14 years and a revision in the form of tenure which, though it in no way damaged the interests of Trinity Hall, allowed those who contributed towards the cost of the rebuilding to be adequately recompensed. The chambers which had

<sup>1</sup> The lease from St. Paul's ran out in 1716.



formerly been leased for 21 years, or until the death of the lessee if that occurred earlier, were to be granted to the lessee, his executors, administrators and assigns, for 40 years, renewable up to 56, and the common rooms, gardens and the like to trustees for the rebuilders. This made rebuilding a reasonable investment and the Doctors, like those who restored the burnt parts of the Temple,<sup>1</sup> readily used their private wealth for that purpose. The work must have started at once and have been completed with all speed, for in little more than a year they were ready to return. On February 14th, 1672, the King authorized the removal of the 'Ecclesiastical and Civil Law Courts of Judicature . . . to their ancient place of Residence the *Doctors Commons* . . . being satisfied that the place is now fit for [their] Reception . . . and that their removal thither will be a considerable Accession to the Reinhabiting of that part of the City'.<sup>2</sup> The move was carried out and 'the Reinhabiting' duly advanced. The City's triumph was shadowed by a victory for the Doctors in the controversy over civic obligations, but their main objective had been gained.

Of the institutions taken for description the College of Arms alone remains intact and on its old site. Gaining rather than losing from the change in its frontage caused by the construction of Queen Victoria Street, it shows no traces of the stages by which it was built or the various hands by which the additions were made. The records are almost as reticent,<sup>3</sup> corporate expenditure and individual benefactors alike leaving little to

<sup>1</sup> The Inner Temple had a tradition of private building, and many of its chambers had been put up at the cost of members, either individually or in groups. The Society's tenure from the Crown was peculiar, but it left it great freedom of action. After the Fire some of the buildings were re-erected by individuals, or with the help of their gifts, and others by the corporate funds: (B.M., Egerton MS. 2981; F. A. Inderwick, *A Calendar of the Inner Temple Records* (1896)).

<sup>2</sup> *London Gazette*, February 14th, 1671-72, quoted in *London Topographical Record*, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> This account is taken from an unfolio'd volume preserved at the College and inscribed 'Repairs and Rebuilding', and from a number of other papers there. It is possible that other records might throw light on points of detail, though it is clear that all considered relevant to the rebuilding has been collected into the volume cited. The other records were, however, removed during the tension preceding the Munich Conference, and have not yet returned (December 1938).

show what they accomplished and when they did it. The first section was apparently begun in 1671, the Heralds having taxed themselves according to their rank to raise £500 for that purpose. This sufficed to start a block on the north side, containing the Hall, Library, Earl Marshal's rooms and eight other rooms, but was not enough either to finish it or to give hope that the rest could be begun before the end of the time limit imposed by the Acts. The College had no revenues, the estimated cost of £5000 was beyond the means of the Heralds themselves, and they had no liking for a mortgage which they might be unable to repay. Accordingly they petitioned the King, setting out the cost and declaring 'the most probable way for raising whereof, they conceived to be for his Majesty by his Commission to recommend the same to his Nobility and Gentry for their voluntary benevolence, who (as persons most concerned) would cheerfully contribute thereunto'. Charles agreed, but, knowing something of human nature, stipulated that the Heralds 'In testimony of their gratitude to their Benefactors [should] take and Register in books of Velome Certificates of the Arms they beare: Their Descents Matches and Issue: Their Liberality'. In spite of this record and publicity, the contributions came in slowly and in small amounts. The Duke of York gave £100, the Archbishop of Canterbury £30, but most were content with £5 or £10, some with less. Not all gave readily. The accounts show a disbursement for 'Expences in following the Court of Aldermen for their subscriptions',<sup>1</sup> and the descents and arms of the givers had also to be traced and entered. In all, ten years produced rather less than £1300, but enough had been received by the middle of 1673 for the north block to be completed and for the plans of the east wing to be submitted to the Earl Marshal for approval. The site was set out by the City surveyor in August of the same year, and the wing must have been finished some time before November 1677, when the accounts were passed, not without questioning by the auditors.

<sup>1</sup> The majority of the members of that much solicited body were knights.

Benefactors appear to have completed the work. Sir William Dugdale, Garter, added the north-west corner at a cost of about £400, and in return enjoyed the chambers there for the rest of his life. Later, the west wing was begun on the gift by Henry St. George, Clarenceux, of the profits of the visitation of 6 counties.<sup>1</sup> This realized £530, but was not sufficient for the work, the chambers remaining 'neither floored ceiled nor glazed'. The would-be occupants had therefore to finish them, Henry St. George spending about £100 on his own share. The rebuilding was thus finished in 1683. Carried out in stages, financed privately and uncertainly, it was typical of much of the reconstruction after the Fire. In one respect, however, it seems to have been unique — it left no burden of debt either to the occupants or to their successors.

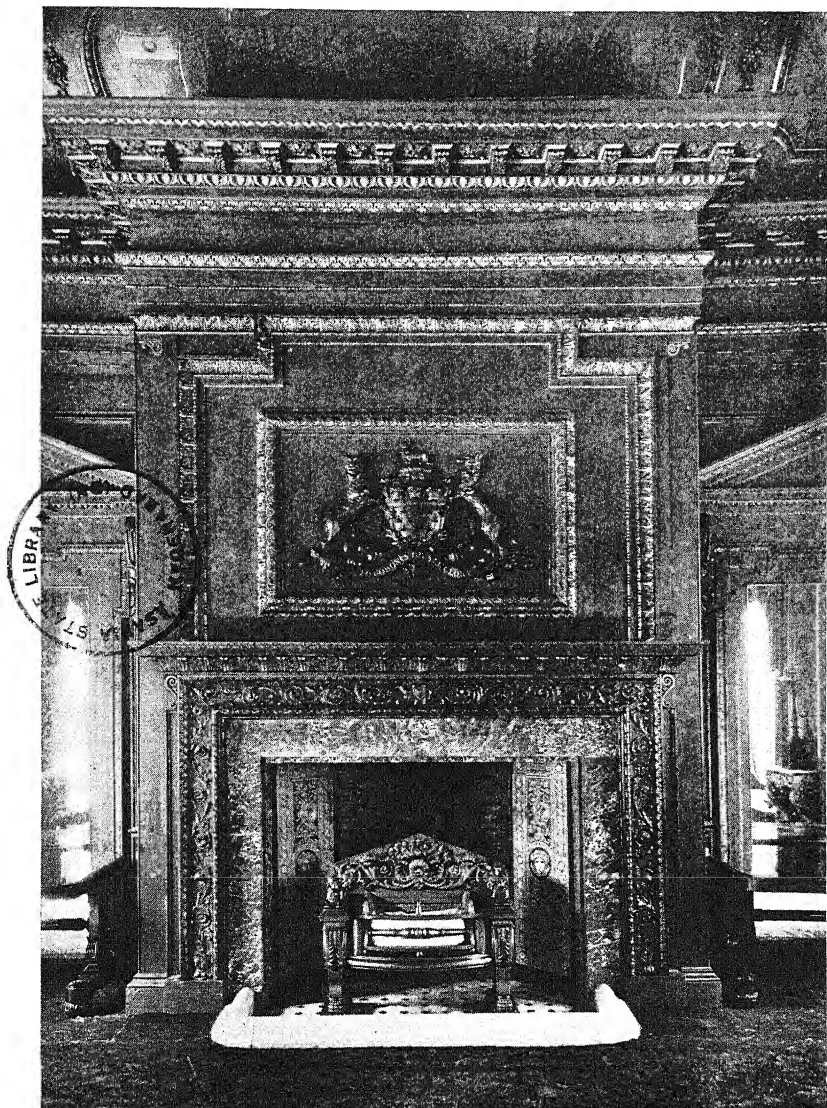
The new Royal Exchange had a very different story. Its restoration was in the hands of the City and the Mercers' Company, the joint trustees appointed by Gresham to manage his estates. Driven by the need to hasten forward a work of such importance to the city's restoration, anxious to make an Exchange worthy of its dignity, embarrassed by lack of money, the trustees<sup>2</sup> had a hard task. The preservation of Gresham College saved them from a double rebuilding and, by affording alternative accommodation for the shopkeepers from the Exchange, provided funds sufficient for the salaries of the professors and the charities due under the founder's will,<sup>3</sup> but apart from that everything was against them. From the start they worked in the dark. They had no accumulated balance.<sup>4</sup> The ruins were dangerous and incapable of being patched up. Materials were hard to estimate, the price of the land necessary for the extensions an unknown quantity, and no carpenter or bricklayer could be found willing to contract for their respective

<sup>1</sup> Thus honouring the intentions of his predecessor, Sir Edward Bysshe, who had promised a part of the profits of 12 counties, but had died before the visitations could be carried out.

<sup>2</sup> The Committee for Gresham Affairs which administered the trust has, throughout this section, been referred to as 'the trustees'.

<sup>3</sup> They amounted to £603 6s. 8d. per annum.

<sup>4</sup> The balance in the Mercers' hands was £234 8s. 2½d., and in the City's £5 2s. 6½d.



The fireplace, Skinners' Hall, Dowgate Hill

## THE PROGRESS OF REBUILDING

sections of the work.<sup>1</sup> Though neither trustee liked beginning on such uncertain bases, reasons of state forbade them to delay. Even so, April was out before the preliminaries had been settled or the ruins partly cleared, and May before Edward Jerman, the surveyor in charge, had returned from travels in search of supplies of suitable stone. There had been no unavoidable delay.<sup>2</sup> The committees had done their best, but circumstances and the difficulties of their task had prevented greater speed. It was September, a year after the Fire, before the plans were finally ready. By then, the trustees, encouraged by the King and their own inclinations, had decided to build the enlargements proposed. The old Exchange, somewhat cramped, and masked by the houses abutting on it, was to be replaced by one more answerable to the importance and dignity of the city. As to money 'the only engine that [could] give vigorous motion to that great and needful work',<sup>3</sup> that was to be raised on the impeccable credit of the individual trustees.

This decided and the plans drawn, the royal consent had to be obtained. The plans in general, and the encroachment on Cornhill necessitated by the enlargements, had each to be approved. This was duly done, Charles declaring that if the proprietors refused reasonable compensation an Act must be passed to compel them to do so. Fairly launched at last, the building was hurried forward. Charles came in state to 'fix' the first pillar, the Duke of York and Prince Rupert coming later to do the same for others. Charles gave the workmen £20 in gold, and the trustees entertained each of the royal visitors to a feast in a 'shed' built amongst the ruins. It was extraordi-

<sup>1</sup> The work had finally to be given to the City bricklayer, John Tanner, and the City carpenter, Roger Jerman.

<sup>2</sup> Except that caused by Edward Jerman. Moved apparently by a mixture of pique and professional etiquette, he left the trustees in doubt for several weeks as to whether or no he would accept the post they offered.

<sup>3</sup> Report to the Common Council of the City of London, entitled *Extracts from the Records of the City of London and the Books of the Joint Committee of the City of London and Mercers' Company, upon Gresham Affairs, . . . respecting the Royal Exchange, 1564-1825* (n.d.), p. 74; (referred to hereinafter as *Extracts*).

narily English, and yet a gesture worth the expense and the trouble. The trumpets and the kettle drums, the banners and the liveries, brought animation to the ruins and assurance to Londoners that their affliction was to have an end. The nearest approach possible to laying a foundation for the new city, it was given the ceremony it deserved.

Once rebuilding had started, the proprietors of the land required for enlargement were the chief obstacle to progress. At first they flatly refused to sell. When the trustees replied with a royal order forbidding them to build, they countered by setting impossible prices on their holdings. Deadlock followed, the trustees pressing on with the inner quadrangle, which was not affected. The heavy expense, the steadily mounting figure of their borrowings, and fears of the greed of the proprietors forced them to seek all possible ways of economizing. In September and October 1668 they even contemplated reducing the size of the building and the number of shops proposed. The lessees of the old shops supported this, stating that the number originally contemplated would ruin them. Their sub-tenants pressed for the larger scheme, urging that it would be the making of the place.<sup>1</sup> Charles declared for enlargement, and reduction was accordingly abandoned. Negotiations with the proprietors were restarted, with no greater success than before. If the trustees' offer of fifteen years' purchase of one-third of the rack rental was somewhat low, the pretensions of the other side were fantastic. Of one, the committee 'judgeing the propositions very unreasonable desired him to think of more moderate termes against another meeting'; of another, 'hee demanding one thousand pounds, the committee thought itt so unreasonable, that they layd aside the thoughts of any further treaty with him'.<sup>2</sup> Edward Jerman's death at the end of 1668 was another blow, only mitigated by the declaration of Thomas Cartwright, the contracting mason, that he was 'master of the

<sup>1</sup> The battle was carried into print – see the anonymous poem – 'Londons Nonsuch or the Glory of the Royal Exchange' (1668), which supported the cause of the sub-tenants.

<sup>2</sup> *Extracts*, p. 88.

wholle designe intended'. Thereupon 'the committee desired him to proceed vigorously in the worke'.<sup>1</sup>

Three months later, the trustees, wearied by 'the unwillingnesse of the lessees and freeholders to [treat on reasonable terms]' and appalled by 'the greatnesse of the charge given in by the workemen since Mr. *Ferman's* death, far exceeding the estimate by him'<sup>2</sup> decided to procure as detailed estimates as possible and then to consider about the proprietors. The results showed that, even assuming full lettings, the rents would only just cover the capital cost. Instead of porticos on all sides they therefore decided to abandon those on the east and west, building retaining walls in their place with an upper pawn of shops above them. A copy of the plan was sent to Wren, now Surveyor-General, with the request that he would speak well of it 'if His Majesty should happen to consult him in the matter'.<sup>3</sup> Charles accepted the change, and with understandable joy one of the recalcitrant proprietors was informed that his land would no longer be needed. Thenceforward the work proceeded more smoothly. The merchants were able to return to the inner quadrangle during September 1669, and at Lady Day 1671 the shopkeepers also moved in. With a relief which can be comprehended, the trustees marked the end of their trials by voting Cartwright a gift of plate and the two chief plasterers a handsome silver tankard apiece.

The work was done, and well done, but it was many years before the outlay was recovered. Construction had cost £51,456 7s. 4d.,<sup>4</sup> and land for the extensions £6666 10s. od. plus

<sup>1</sup> *Extracts*, p. 93. The appointment of another surveyor was considered, but no move made.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102. Sir John Denham, the former Surveyor-General, had been a constant friend to the trustees, helping their petitions to the King and ensuring that they had adequate supplies of stone from Portland. He had taken their side in the disputes with the proprietors, viewing the site and advising the King accordingly. The gratified trustees showed their appreciation by giving him a dinner and presenting him with thirty gold guineas.

<sup>4</sup> This is the sum of the entries, under the head of rebuilding, shown in the *Gresham Account Book* kept by the City, totalled at Michaelmas 1674 and supplemented by one item paid in 1676 which clearly refers to the rebuilding. Entries, such as rewards to



a perpetual annuity of £30. In return the rents yielded approximately £3000 per annum, with low fines paid roughly once every ten years. To finance the building each trustee had lent £26,700, charging simple interest at the standard rate of 6 per cent. The margin was therefore negligible, and it was, in fact, not until January 1676 that payments of either principal or interest could begin. In 1694, twenty-five years after the return of the merchants, the moiety of the principal owed to the City stood at £20,000 and interest had only been brought up to Christmas 1683. The venture had been brave, its moral value incalculable, but the aim had been over high, and the penalty long years of embarrassment.

The progress of private rebuilding is the hardest to analyse. No authority kept statistics of houses begun and houses completed, the hearth tax had been remitted, and though the staking of foundations was a necessary preliminary to building, there is no means of judging the interval between it and the actual start of work. Its finance is equally obscure. The records and the accounts for each builder's operations, if kept at all, can seldom have survived long; there are no contractors' or bankers' figures to take their place; and it is only occasionally that a letter or a diary throws a ray of light into the darkness. Yet, if exact calculations are impossible, sufficient evidence remains for the conclusion of reasonably accurate conjectures about both progress and finance.

It is important as a preliminary to realize the extent of the loss. The houses destroyed were computed at 13,200, representing a value of about £4,000,000. Goods and commodities added another £3,650,000, and eighteenth-century historians,<sup>1</sup> by including estimates for transport and the like,

<sup>1</sup> The estimates given in Strype's *Stow* were usually followed: (bk. I, p. 227).

officers for the extra work entailed, which would now be included, were not charged to that account, but they would not seriously increase the total. The Mercers, in a return to the House of Commons made nearly 80 years later, declared that the cost, to July 12th, 1676, was £58,962, exclusive of land: (*Commons' Journals*, xxv, p. 543b). I suspect that this was a mistake. Where Strype obtained his figure of £80,000 I do not know, unless he added the cost of interest up to some unspecified date.



brought the combined figures to nearly £8,000,000. Almost the whole of this huge loss had to be made good in the first instance by private individuals, some from the provinces, most from London. True, in the case of houses, corporate bodies<sup>1</sup> owned a substantial fraction of the number burnt, but as they left rebuilding to their tenants, it was upon the latter that the immediate burden was laid. In the matter of goods the corporations shared more evenly. There was no immediate call upon individuals to replace the losses of Companies and parishes, and the restoration of such items as the unsold Coventry cloth destroyed in Blackwell Hall was not a concern for Londoners.<sup>2</sup> Though provincial owners of London houses must normally have arranged for rebuilding to be carried out by old or new tenants, that is to say, by Londoners,<sup>3</sup> the provincial merchant had to bear in person the loss of unsold goods. Yet, if for purposes of computing the private person's share in restoration, the second figure can be reduced, the first should probably be increased. The new brick houses were worth more than the motley collection that had been destroyed, and the diminution in their numbers was not enough to counterbalance their greater value. Whatever the loading adopted, it is clear that the resultant was appallingly high. Most of the richer inhabitants suffered, and many owners of property were reduced to temporary beggary, lords of unsaleable heaps of ashes, pressing for uncollectable rents. Petitions to Charles and to the City show something of this general distress. Sir William Wale and Sir James Bunce asking for payment of money due to them, declared, one that he had 'lost his own dwelling house and several

<sup>1</sup> Including parishes and trustees for charities.

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1666-67, pp. 110, 168. The loss to the Coventry clothiers was reported as £2000, 'which is a great deal as the times go'.

<sup>3</sup> It is very hard to find out what these owners did. Corporate bodies, like the Oxford and the Cambridge colleges, arranged for tenants to rebuild, and it seems probable that the private owners did the same. Offers would be received from some tenants to undertake the work, and, if reasonable, would seldom be rejected. Failing such offers, owners living several days' journey away, and Cambridge was two days distant, would surely have sought for other tenants in preference to appointing some agent to supervise a speculative building at their own expense.

others and all of his wines' (his stock in trade), and the other that the 'fire had consumed almost all his substance', whilst Charles 'in compassion to the losses sustained by his stationer' actually made him a grant of money.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that Wale and Bunce were strengthening their appeals by making the most of their troubles, but there is a ring of truth about the statement of another petitioner that the loss of houses worth £5000 had forced her and her children with her, 'to turn servants'.<sup>2</sup> Private letters written without the object of creating pity tell the same tale. 'Griffen, of the Common Council in Hereford, has lost £1000 in Houses', wrote Windham Sandys.<sup>3</sup> The Earl of Orrery appealed for Sir Boyle Maynard, pricked sheriff for County Cork, who would be ruined if he could not go to London to settle his affairs 'the best part of his estate being . . . consumed by the fire'.<sup>4</sup> Lady Gardiner, writing in person, mourned the destruction of property that was 'all my sone had to depend on and my girls', there being 'bot one house left of 18 pound a yeare of all that number',<sup>5</sup> whilst Doctor Denton succinctly recorded the loss of his livelihood as well as his possessions: 'More than the whole city is in ashes', he declared, 'wherein W. Gape & my selfe have great shares in St. Sythes Lane, and in Salisbury Court in reversion and I & wife in possession, & to render our condition more deplorable, the depopulation is soe vast that it cannot afford us a livelihood.' It was small wonder that he added 'so that I want the advice of all my friends to advise what I had best doe'.<sup>6</sup> Many in his position, unable either to build for themselves or to prevail upon their tenants to undertake it for them, were forced to sell, and a glutted market saw values drop to the fantastic. 'Builders

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1666-67, pp. 167, 245, 384; 1667, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1666-67, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine Library; English Topography*, part xv, London, ed. G. L. Gomme (1904), I, p. 160.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Morrice, *State Letters of the Right Honourable Roger Boyle, the First Earl of Orrery* (Dublin, 1743), II, p. 107.

<sup>5</sup> Margaret M. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family, 1660 to 1696*, IV (1899), p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

& Tenants are to seek', wrote Moll Gape in the autumn of 1667, 'ground goes even a begging & there is soe much to be sold that it becomes every day cheaper than the other'.<sup>1</sup> With compulsory sales then a bare two years ahead,<sup>2</sup> the lot of the landlord was unenviable. There were, however, forces helping to stabilize the position. The widespread use of beneficial leases gave many tenants a strong incentive to rebuild, and, by chance, the number of such holdings was then unusually high. The embarrassment of the City and its Companies had been driving them to let every available property for the maximum fine obtainable, and the 1650s had seen a spate of sixty-year leases at rents fixed thirty and more years earlier. Tenants with between forty and fifty years of their holding still to run were only likely to surrender if genuinely hard pressed. They were compelled to go on paying their rents, whether they built or not, and it was quickly made clear to them that, whilst no help would be given by the landlord, rebuilding would be compensated with a standard and attractive extension of tenure. Tenants thus situated gained nothing by delay, but might profit by being first in the field. Less than 2 per cent of the Bridge House leases were surrendered, and only in 6 cases were the arrears of rent left unpaid.<sup>3</sup> Those with sufficient money could negotiate terms and begin at once: those whose funds were low had ample security on which to borrow.

This second course was not difficult, for it is clear that plenty of money was available. The modern habit of keeping slender balances and investing all else — a product of government respectability, thrift clubs, building societies and the limited liability company — was then unthought of. Trade

<sup>1</sup> Margaret M. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family*, 1660 to 1696, IV (1899 p. 145).

<sup>2</sup> The first Rebuilding Act, s. 13, authorized the City to take the first steps three years after the Fire. The period was subsequently prolonged (see p. 135, note 4).

<sup>3</sup> These figures exclude leases affected by the waterline, new streets or some special circumstance, but otherwise they include all 'burnt' tenants. The leases treated are 103, covering about 125 houses (pre-Fire). They have been worked out from the Journals, papers and view book of the Bridge House Committee, the leases themselves, and the Bridge House rentals. Some gaps remain, but I am satisfied that the conclusions are fair.

attracted a high proportion of the wealth of the commercial classes, but even there prudence suggested that a part should be kept in actual metal as a reserve against the unforeseen. Other walks of life saw few alternatives for thrift besides land and buildings, or the safety of a well-locked chest. The long-drawn-out financial distress of the Companies and the enterprise and prestige of the greater goldsmiths had drawn forth a fraction of that second reserve,<sup>1</sup> but for the most part it lay hidden, obscure and incalculable. By all indications it must have been great. The Common Council men and the churchwardens of St. Dunstan's in the West, ordered to 'meet . . . in the Vestry and open the Iron Chest there to take an Accompt what Money was there belonging to the parish stock', found nearly £650 besides more than £200 held on account of a separate charity.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Goddard, Gresham professor of physick, had '1,000 Guinys and 300 broad pieces'<sup>3</sup> in a similar chest housed in his back study, and his colleague, Hooke, hoarded as he did. Left an orphan at thirteen, with a portion of only £100, he died with 'some thousands of pounds' in the inevitable 'chest'.<sup>4</sup> These two cannot be dismissed as academic freaks. Though few would have included in their accounts Hooke's item 'Much love to all my friends I owe',<sup>5</sup> both followed the normal practices of their day. Pepys, shrewd and suspicious, was doing much the same. At the end of 1666 he had more than a third of his net estate, £2350 out of £6200, in gold under his own roof,<sup>6</sup> while Petty, brave investor though he was, had £6600 in cash and £2500 in the hands of two goldsmiths,

<sup>1</sup> The parish of St. Bartholomew Exchange lent £300 to the Grocers, All Hallows the Great £100 to Isaac Meynell, and St. Christopher Le Stocks some to him and some to John Colvill. See also the relationship between the Duke of Bedford and the goldsmiths described in *Life in a Noble Household 1641-1700* by Miss Gladys Scott Thomson (1937).

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge University Library, MS. 4144, St. Dunstan's in the West, minutes and accounts for repairs, 1659-63, pp. 6 and 27.

<sup>3</sup> Hooke's *Diary*, op. cit., p. 154. He left no will.

<sup>4</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, ix, p. 1178b. The picturesque statement that the chest had been unopened for thirty years is refuted by his diary.

<sup>5</sup> *Diary*, p. 265.

<sup>6</sup> *Diary*, September 5th and December 31st, 1666.

at the time his will was made.<sup>1</sup> The practice was universal, but not inviolable. Land and buildings, still the most respected of all investments, backed by urgent personal appeals, were strong enough after the Fire to entice at least a part of such funds from their hiding. The City had no difficulty in expanding its debt from £45,733 in 1669 to £128,569 in 1674, nor in borrowing a nett £57,715 on the security of the coal dues during the same period. Pepys was very ready to listen to the appeal of his cousin, Antony Joyce, 'being willing to have some money out of my hands upon good security'.<sup>2</sup> The rebuilding of Nelly Denton's chambers in the Temple was the subject of a family appeal,<sup>3</sup> and Nicholas Barbon was able to borrow at six per cent to rebuild the Lock and Key in Fleet Street.<sup>4</sup> The Companies, as we have seen, easily raised money when they had good security, and the parishes did the same. £400 would build a house of the pattern prescribed for 'High and Principal Streets', £300 one of the next category.<sup>5</sup> Such sums were well within the powers of the private lender, and were not likely to remain too long outstanding to suit him. Barbon, who had presumably spent not more than £400 on the Lock and Key, and had borrowed £300 of it, leased it at once for twenty-one years in consideration of a fine of £105, and an annual rent of £60. His own tenure was over forty years, he had paid no fine, and his rent had been reduced, in return for his rebuilding, to £15 per annum.<sup>6</sup> After the fullest provision for amortization, his margin of profit was therefore substantial. Given confidence in the city's future, such profits could not fail to attract investors.

It is doubtful how far the demand for capital was met by the inflow of funds from outside. The City, the greatest single borrower, met its requirements by borrowing in small sums,

<sup>1</sup> Dated May 2nd, 1685, and cited in *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, xxiv, Antiquities, p. 111-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Diary*, December 22nd, 1667, and January 5th, 1668.

<sup>3</sup> *Verney Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 2827.

<sup>5</sup> M. Philipps, op. cit., in the unnumbered pages 'To the Reader'.

<sup>6</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 2827. *Guildhall Recs.*, C. 152 (Fire Decree, Barbone v. Speght).

mainly from the London area. The provinces supplied something for the needs of private persons, but probably not very much. The country owner of London sites may sometimes have undertaken rebuilding, but he was much more likely to seek out a tenant who would do it for him.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, London families, like the members of the Verney clan, may have drawn upon their country connections, but here again it must in most cases have been easier to approach either neighbours or professional lenders. The latter were beginning to attract occasional country clients, but there is nothing to show that this movement received a stimulus after the Fire. Claims were made that Dutch funds played a part. It was notorious that certain Londoners acted as agents for such moneys, and, rival or no rival, the lenders would have had no qualms about helping in the city's restoration. But the allegation that they did was contested as often as it was made. *Mr. Titus* says that a great part of the money used in trade and for the building of London is Dutch money. *Mr. Child* does not believe there is 10,000*l* of foreign money here.' The committee of the House of Lords which listened to these views made no final pronouncement upon them.<sup>2</sup> It seemed clear that there had formerly been large foreign balances. 'It is stated that Alderman Bucknell had above 100,000*l* in his hands, Mr. Meynell above 30,000*l*, Mr. Vandeput at one time 60,000*l*, Mr. Dericost always near 200,000*l*, of Dutch money, lent to merchants at 7, 6, and 5 per cent, when money was at 8 per cent.' But, when the legal rate was lowered to 6 per cent, the money had apparently returned to Holland. It was said that 'Dutch merchants, who are the usual lenders of Dutch money, say there is no considerable quantity of Dutch money in England; and . . . it is contended that trade has increased since the withdrawal of foreign money and the lowering of interest from 8 per cent'. Child, who ought to have known, seems to have represented the general

<sup>1</sup> There is an interesting example in the lease by Matthew Hunter, Rector of Newbold Pacie, Warwickshire, and Sarah, his wife, to Edward Marshall, mason: (*Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 833).

<sup>2</sup> *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Eighth Report*, appendix, p. 134.



A loving cup of 1671 given to the Fishmongers' Company



view, but, whichever opinion one accepts, Papillon appears to clinch the argument against an inflow of fresh funds. 'Capital', he declared, 'was much impaired by the fire, being taken up in rebuilding.' If new supplies had flowed in from Holland the shortage would not have been acute. Finance was not a dry ditch set between the dispossessed and his new habitation. The springs were there, but the waters had not depth enough to float both trade and rebuilding. Rebuilding did not suffer, trade did, and the moral would appear to be that the Dutch did not come in to make good the deficiency.

Rebuilding was helped in other and less obvious ways. Its progress was a matter of public concern, urged as a duty by spiritual as well as by secular authority. Samuel Rolle devised sermons to that sole end and delivered them week by week through the year 1668.<sup>1</sup> Others did the same, stressing the moral of the Fire and proclaiming the need to rebuild. The rich were exhorted to lend, landlords to grant fair terms, workmen to labour hard, and suppliers of materials to wrong themselves rather than others. Rebuilding was extolled as a work of honour and proved to be one of profit. Litigation was deprecated, moderation advised. Fair minded and balanced, such sermons, if Rolle's congregation attended for guidance as well as for gaping, must have taken some effect.

The Fire Court did its share, and the author of *The City and Country Purchaser and Builder*<sup>2</sup> had good reason to dedicate his manual to its judges. Their patience was inexhaustible. They unravelled tangles, cut knots, and guided the irrational towards reason, but the purport of each decree was fixed in advance. Litigants left them relieved of disputes and difficulties, but under firm obligation to build, and tied by a timetable to do so. They were scrupulous in all things, but, if equity was their compass, rebuilding was their pole star.

The slump in values, though disastrous to hard hit owners brought its own drastic remedy. Venturers' appetites were

<sup>1</sup> *London's Resurrection* (1668).

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Primatt. The date of the dedication is October 1667.



whetted, and ordinary men stimulated to add to their holdings. Speculators like Barbon bought cheaply and built to sell or let; rich men like Backwell planned whole estates;<sup>1</sup> the ordinary citizen improved his own amenities or invested in extra rents.<sup>2</sup> The dispersion inevitably left many settled in their temporary dwellings.<sup>3</sup> It gave others a welcome or an acceptable opportunity to join the drift to the suburbs and the area round the Court. But it also produced its own antidote. Improvements reduced the number of sites available, removed the worst features of the old city, and made it more attractive as a residence. The aldermen, compelled by law to live in it,<sup>4</sup> built the great mansions whose sites may still be seen on Ogilby's map. Others were able to build as and where they liked. The choice between a high price for an adapted dwelling in the suburbs and the burden of rebuilding to one's own fancy in the city must often have favoured the latter, despite the duties it entailed.

The progress of this class of rebuilding was not directed along special channels. Carried out piecemeal, each house was put up when its respective builder was ready to begin. There was no plan, and no time table, either for the streets or for the buildings in them.<sup>5</sup> The Acts forced each man to leave

<sup>1</sup> See J. B. Martin, *The Grasshopper in Lombard Street* (1892), bk. 3, chap. 2. To Pepys it seemed 'a little town': (*Diary*, April 12th, 1669).

<sup>2</sup> The Bridge records show a number of instances, for example Thomas Honeylove, who added five houses probably situated behind the two he already leased.

<sup>3</sup> Some because they preferred to, some because they had to. For the latter, cf. Rolle, 'many citizens . . . are now residing in the Suburbs, and like to continue there . . . Nevertheless, Londoners cannot justly be compelled to plant within the walls again . . . [and] it were harsh to compel them against their interest . . . sith many of them have taken long leases of their houses in the suburbs, (and indeed could get no shorter) and have given great fines, and know not how to put off the houses they have taken, and to reimburse themselves without insufferable loss, and diminution': (op. cit., pp. 225-6).

<sup>4</sup> After the Fire, when there was no accommodation available, this rule was relaxed. It was in force again, with certain exceptions, in 1675: (*Repert.*, 78, f. 115v; *Ibid.*, 80, ff. 17, 133).

<sup>5</sup> On February 2nd, 1667, the House of Commons passed a motion prohibiting rebuilding in Thames Street, dye-houses only excepted, for the reason that 'that street will be sure to be built at any time, and if it should be now begun to be built it would take up all the workmen and obstruct the building of the whole city': (*Milward's Diary*, op. cit., p. 77). The Act contained no such clause.

toothings so that his neighbours' houses could be joined to his, and a series of admirable regulations safeguarded those who started at different times. Nothing more was thought possible or necessary. Provided that the regulations were carried out, the authorities let matters take their own course. The time limit imposed by the provisions for the sale of unbuilt tofts had always to be borne in mind, but otherwise the work went forward unhampered and undirected. For a time the effect was patchy and unpleasing. Rolle<sup>1</sup> complained of 'the *ill method* that is or hath been used in building, viz. *building altogether scatteringly*, and not every where *joyning the new building to the old*, nor finishing any one whole street', but it was clear that no other way was practicable.<sup>2</sup> His picture of the city in 1668, its very worst time, is a gloomy commentary on the progress it was then making. In the New Year it was 'if anything more than an *Embryo*', 'but in its infancy', 'the beginnings of the new . . . not yet so great as the small remainders of the old'. In March he conceived that there might be 'seven or eight hundred houses finished'. In the summer he likened it to a village, the houses standing 'so scatteringly' 'the major part . . . let out to Alehouse-keepers and Victuallers to entertain workmen employed about the city'. Even those who had rebuilt still lived elsewhere, lack of inhabitants making trade unprofitable. Fortunately the 'Alehouse-keepers and Victuallers' were the forerunners of better things. The workmen for whom they catered were making all speed with the restoration, and the figures in the staking books<sup>3</sup> show that recovery was gathering momentum. Between May 13th, 1667, when the books were first opened, and the

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Pace Colonel Birch, who would have had 'chosen some persons in trust, and sold the whole ground, and let it be sold again by them, with preference to the old owner, which would certainly have caused the City to be built where these Trustees pleased': (*Pepys's Diary*, February 24th, 1667). Given confidence, integrity, and unlimited time, it might have worked, but Parliament refused to believe in the scheme and after-knowledge seems to prove that the members were right.

<sup>3</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MSS. 275-8. It is clear from the three surveyors' papers that an appreciable number of foundations were never paid for, and were therefore neither set out nor entered in these books.

end of that year, only 843 sites had been paid for. The first three months of 1668 nearly doubled this total, April added another 303, and the whole year produced 2375. 1669 brought 2349, and 1670, 1316. Five years after the Fire, on September 1st, 1671, the total stood at 7359,<sup>1</sup> ninety per cent of the number eventually set out. Considering all things, such progress was satisfactory.

Sites set out were not necessarily sites soon to be built upon, but the relationship was likely to be close. The same holds good for the conclusion of agreements to rebuild. They might be entered into for a variety of reasons, but where, as in the case of tenants to corporations, the tenant gained nothing more than the formal recording of standard terms, application was likely to be delayed until, with the arrears of rent in his pocket, he could go and settle the whole matter at one interview. To apply before being in a position to pay was likely to cause pressing demands for the debt to be liquidated, without any advantage in the matter of rebuilding.<sup>2</sup> The normal course was probably for the tenant to bring his arrangements to maturity and then to approach his landlord. If this is so, the figures for the renewal of the Bridgehouse leases amply corroborate the course of events suggested by the staking books.<sup>3</sup>

The Bridgehouse Committee were instructed on February 15th, 1667, to negotiate with their tenants about rebuilding,<sup>4</sup> and on March 13th they were empowered to grant the necessary extensions of tenure.<sup>5</sup> There was no rush to come to terms. The lines of the streets were not yet known, and the reward for building had not been conventionalized. The

<sup>1</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 361.

<sup>2</sup> Where the fine was heavy and the annual rent little more than a ground rent, remissions for the time between destruction and rebuilding were rare. The Bridge hardly ever granted it. Most tenants let the arrears accumulate until agreement about rebuilding had been reached, and then paid in full.

<sup>3</sup> It is significant that many of the Bridge tenants did not get their foundations staked out until after they had arranged for their new leases.

<sup>4</sup> *Journal of the Bridge House Committee*, II, f. 4. They were to summon the tenants before them.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 4.

general regulations embodied in the act of Common Council of April 29th were not officially established until that date. Reluctance to negotiate is therefore understandable. Once the position was made clear, that reluctance vanished. The first agreement was made on May 1st, the second a week later, and twenty-four had been concluded by the end of 1667.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter the figures, calculated half yearly until June 30th, 1673, are: 17, 13, 9, 11, 6, 4, 2, 3, 1 and 1.<sup>2</sup> At that date four sites were still unbuilt, and two more had been built upon following decrees obtained by the tenants from the Fire Court. Nearly all the tenants concerned had over forty-five years to run when the Fire destroyed their premises and therefore had every incentive to rebuild as soon as possible, yet they were not outstandingly in advance of others in getting their foundations set out. In Old Change, where 68 sites were paid for, their entries are numbered 7, 13, 19, 25, 26, 29, 31, 36-8 and 42-5. In Paternoster Row they are 3, 5-7, 9, 19, 20, 35, 40-2, 51, 57-61, 66, 77 and 87, out of a total entry of 95; and in Newgate Street, 1, 10, 15-18, 20, 30-2, 38-40, 42-3, 79-80, 88-9, 94-5, 99, 110-18, 128, 134-38 and 157, out of 159. Only in the Fenchurch Street area, where the sites were related and ownerships few, were they noticeably ahead of their neighbours.<sup>3</sup>

These figures suggest that the bulk of private rebuilding was nearing completion by the end of 1670, and that the next two years added all sites except those affected by specially unfavourable circumstances. Other evidence supports this

<sup>1</sup> The dates are those on which the tenant and the committee came to an agreement. The document embodying it was often delayed for some time and not signed until months had elapsed. For the purpose of rebuilding it was of secondary importance.

<sup>2</sup> To obtain the approximate number of pre-Fire houses covered by these agreements, the first five figures should be increased by 10, 1, 1, 5 and 2 respectively, and that for 1667 by 3. This brings them into line with the staking books, which were concerned with old foundations and not new buildings. There may have been some reduction in the total Bridge houses after the Fire, but comparison is made difficult by the question of land taken for and taken in from the streets.

<sup>3</sup> In Fenchurch Street, 2-4, 17 and 19 out of 99; in Rood Lane, 1, 3, 9, 11 and 13 out of 28; in Philpot Lane, 5 and 6 out of 21. It is impossible to identify all the entries with absolute accuracy, but the picture given is correct in all essentials.

conclusion. Foundations continued to be surveyed until as late as 1696, but, of the 855 entered after September 1st, 1671, 557 were before the end of 1673 and some of those in the later years had nothing to do with the great Fire. In 1670 and 1671 life in London was fast returning to normal. 1670 opened with an agreement for the fitting up of the new markets at the Stocks, Newgate and Honey Lane,<sup>1</sup> and an order for the return of the coal market from Tower Hill to Billingsgate.<sup>2</sup> It ended with instructions to the surveyors to make all haste and to the paviors to use 'all the strength and might they cann' in a determined effort to repave the 'High Streets'.<sup>3</sup> The following year was marked by repairs to the public landing places at Queenhithe, Trigg Lane and the Old Swan. Those at Billingsgate and Puddle Dock had been dealt with in 1669,<sup>4</sup> and Blackfriars and the Three Cranes, delayed by special circumstances,<sup>5</sup> were started in 1672. The passage in April 1671 of a paving and cleansing Act had both been necessitated by and facilitated the progress of repopulation.<sup>6</sup> The purchase of land for essential laystalls was made possible, and the authorities were enabled to spend over £3650<sup>7</sup> on additional street paving. The markets and the transport required for the restored area were thus provided, and only the old public water supply remained unrestored. The pipes themselves had been repaired, but the question of alternatives to the former conduit system had not been solved.<sup>8</sup> It had, however, become a comparatively

<sup>1</sup> *Jor.*, 47, f. 20. This was the climax to a long series of negotiation and discussion in the City Lands Committee. Very soon afterwards the markets were functioning.

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 47, f. 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 366, No. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Work of various kinds in connection with the dock and stairs at Billingsgate went on over a number of years, and the entries are difficult to disentangle. In April 1669 the Committees were ready to contract with carpenters for the stairs (*C.L.M.*, f. 87), and there were payments for them in that year. A petition for the repair of the stairs at Puddle Dock was heard in September 1668 and payment for the completed work was authorized thirteen months later: (*Reper.*, 73, f. 262 and 74, f. 309).

<sup>5</sup> Blackfriars by the waterline, Three Cranes by a dispute over the ownership of land.

<sup>6</sup> 22 & 23 Charles II, c. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Up to September 29th, 1672. More was spent in the years following. The accounts are in 2 volumes in the *Guildhall Records*, shelf 300.

<sup>8</sup> See *Jor.*, 47, ff. 144, 215.

## THE PROGRESS OF REBUILDING

minor matter. Had it been pressing, an earlier solution would have been found. As it was, the new houses had given opportunities for the laying on of water, and the New River Company and the London Bridge Waterworks, in competition, had successfully extended their services to many of them.<sup>1</sup>

The restoration of public services was accompanied by that of trade. The press of drays passing over the Bridge compelled the appointment in 1670 of what must have been the first regular London traffic policemen.<sup>2</sup> Lower down the river, the Custom House was completed in 1671, and the same year saw the rehousing of the King's Beam<sup>3</sup> and the return of the shopkeepers to the Royal Exchange.<sup>4</sup> The autumn of that year brought signs of restoration that may surely be regarded as infallible. The Lord Mayor's Day was once again enlivened by its 'ancient Shows and Solemnities',<sup>5</sup> and the inhabitants were called on to pay a general rate.<sup>6</sup> Clearly London was itself again.

<sup>1</sup> *Guildhall Recs.*, small MSS. boxes 11, no. 25; 32, no. 6; 37, no. 37; *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1667-68, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> *Repert.*, 75, f. 313v; *Ibid.*, 80, f. 256v. The traffic was ordered to keep to the side of the road opposite to that now in force.

<sup>3</sup> A new and more commodious weigh-house having been built in Little Eastcheap, to take the place of the old one on Cornhill, the City ordered the beam to be moved to it: (March 6th, 1671, *Jor.*, 47, f. 107).

<sup>4</sup> John Ward, op. cit., p. xiv.

<sup>5</sup> *Jor.*, 47, f. 143.

<sup>6</sup> Levied by the commissioners of sewers and pavements under the Act of 1671.

## THE CITY REBUILT

TEN years after the Fire the secular work was complete, and the citizens could take stock of the changes. These were striking. The new city, if not unrecognizable, was very different from the old. It had been restored rather than replanned, but restoration had been accompanied by a purge in which every effort had been made to reduce shortcomings and abolish evils. Most of the reforms now seem commonplace, but to contemporaries they were almost revolutionary. First and foremost was the wholesale, compulsory adoption of a superior building material. Timber and another 'Great Fire' were abolished together. The new houses were all constructed of brick or stone, to their great and lasting benefit. Linked with this was the logical but drastic enforcement of better housing standards. 'In the old city there had been many substantially built houses, and whole streets had been famous for the wealth of their inhabitants, but order and uniformity were entirely lacking, and the standard of construction was low. With the exception of a few in stone, the greater houses had been built of stout timber frames, filled in with laths and covered over with plaster. The meaner had often been no more than casings of weather boards fastened to frames, and the meaner far outnumbered the greater.'<sup>1</sup> The position had been aggravated by the growing scarcity of timber, which jeopardized a method of construction sound enough if well maintained. Landlords had become reluctant to make even necessary repairs, and the much vaunted splendour of Cheapside had been small compensation for the ill-secured rottenness of the alleys behind. By modern standards, in fact, much of

<sup>1</sup> T. F. Reddaway, 'The Rebuilding of London after the Fire, (b) the work of the City authorities', in *The Town Planning Review*, XVII (Liverpool, 1937), p. 276.

the old city would have been classed as a slum, and the authorities took the only possible means for preventing this by insisting on the erection of houses whose construction was carefully regulated. The provisions of the Acts covered everything that could, with advantage, be regulated, be it the position of cellar flaps or the construction of sewers. Scantlings were fixed for the woodwork, beams and girders, laths and rafters alike. The thickness of the walls, the height of the rooms, and the levels of basement and street were all prescribed. Finally, the appointment of surveyors, sworn to discover infringements, securely removed the whole work from the usual realms of ineffectual paternalism. Undoubtedly breaches of the rules were still committed. Some were prosecuted, others remained undetected, but in the main the standards were observed. The rickety wooden houses and the deep over-crowded basements which had been one of the curses of the old city were abolished from the rebuilt area. 'Ordered lines of regulation but seemly houses<sup>1</sup> replaced the picturesque inconveniences of the pre-fire days. Jutties, bulks, projecting shop-fronts, and water-pipes gouting on to the passers-by almost entirely disappeared.'<sup>2</sup> Evelyn could no longer upbraid the city for its former shortcomings. Signs had ceased to swing right across the principal streets, to the danger of the pedestrians, the houses were built straight to the level of the attics, and the air no longer confined in narrow passages made narrower by buildings stepped out at every story. It was the beginning of a town-planned street architecture, the culmination of the unrealized dreams of the first two Stuarts. Calamity had made possible what their edicts could never enforce. At heavy cost, in time and money, the city was recreated in brick and stone, without hovels, without ill-planned, ill-executed temporary buildings, and without slums.

<sup>1</sup> John Woodward, M.D., Gresham Lecturer in Physic, described them as 'so many thousand Houses, of even private Citizens, built in such manner as to render them, not only more convenient, better fitted for Use and for serving all the Ends and Offices of Life and Habitation, but even superior in Design, and Architecture, to the Palaces of Princes elsewhere': (*A Letter to Sr Christopher Wren, K<sup>nt</sup>, Occasion'd by some Antiquities lately discover'd near Bishops-Gate London*, written June 1707, published 1713).

<sup>2</sup> *The Town Planning Review*, op. cit., p. 277.



The change, though almost unbelievable, passed without comment. For the city it was a stride out of medievalism, broken down by the effect of over-growth, into something almost modern. For the London area it was only an extension of the standards of the new estates in Westminster and its outskirts. Significantly it was accompanied by an evolutionary administrative reform of the highest importance. Authority over the vital but mismanaged concerns of drains and sewers, street paving, street levels, and street cleansing was handed over to a single body of commissioners.<sup>1</sup> Appointed by the City, with exclusive control, they had power to impose taxes and to distrain if they were not paid. A central body, though left to work through the old machinery of ward and parish, they were in a position to overcome unneighbourly jealousies and local conservatism; transcending parochial divisions in the interests of a wider project or of general uniformity. Naturally the innovation was not wholly successful, yet it was a real improvement, with results to justify its creation. Paving still disintegrated under the pressure of iron tyres,<sup>2</sup> and the authorities had still to consider 'the universall Complaint made through the whole City of the great and continuall neglect of cleansing the streetes'.<sup>3</sup> But the conditions of the period were largely responsible for these failings, and there was much to counter-balance them. Foot-passengers owed the security of the post-protected pedestrian tracks along the sides of the 'High Streets' to the Commissioners' work.<sup>4</sup> Their authority, to take one example, lay behind the construction of the great new drain which carried away sewage from the houses in Fleet

<sup>1</sup> 18 & 19 Charles II, c. 8, s. 18; 22 & 23 Charles II, c. 17; 2 William and Mary, c. 8. These problems had long been under discussion, particularly during the days of reforming zeal under the Commonwealth (see the discussions which led up to the act of Common Council of September 11th, 1655, set out in *Jor.*, 41, ff. 123 *et seq.*). The successes achieved by the commission created for Westminster by 14 Charles II, c. 2, had a marked influence.

<sup>2</sup> See the enactment against them in 2 William and Mary, c. 8, s. xix.

<sup>3</sup> *Jor.*, 50, f. 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 327. Act of Common Council in *Jor.*, 47, f. 146v *et seq.*, rule III.



No. 34 Great Tower Street, a house of the 'fourth and greatest sort' built soon after the Fire

Street and so added to the amenities of twelve hundred people in an important area.<sup>1</sup> Their order ensured for the surface of that street restoration without that curse of all traffic, the usual herring-bone of open gutters carrying water from the houses to a channel along the centre of the road. It was they who gave reality to the collector's fearsome threat, 'you are . . . to pay . . . or else your Dreyne wilbe stopt'. And it was to them that Lord Keeper Guilford<sup>2</sup> turned when his neighbours would have none of his ideas for improving the sanitation and the health of Chancery Lane. The story of Guilford's actions aptly shows the conditions and the mentality with which they had to deal. In the early 1670s he moved into the great brick house in the Lane which had escaped the Fire and had been Lord Chief Justice Hyde's before him. There he found 'a small well in the cellar, into which all the drainage of the house was received', from closet and sink alike. When this well was full 'a pump went to work to clear it into the open kennel [gutter] of the street'. As may be imagined 'during this pumping the stench was intolerable', offending 'not only his lordship, but all the houses in the street, and also passengers that passed to and fro in it'. Nor was his the only house to create such a nuisance, for 'other houses there, which had any cellars, were obnoxious to the same inconveniences'. Guilford proposed that the inhabitants should join in making a drain along the street deep enough to discharge into the new sewer under Fleet Street, but they refused, 'alleging danger to their houses, and other frivolous matters'. There, in the old days, the affair would have stopped, the passengers holding their noses, and the householders sealing their windows. But the commissioners opened up new possibilities, and Guilford was not the man to let them lie unused. He applied for and obtained a decree by virtue of which the work was done in despite of the inhabitants, and the cost of it collected from them under threat of distraint. Whereupon,

<sup>1</sup> See the records of this whole work amongst the papers preserved in the church of St. Bride. 247 houses were assessed to pay for it, hence the figure of 1200 people.

<sup>2</sup> Francis North. The story is in *The Life of the Right Honourable Francis North*, I, pp. 156-7, by The Honourable Roger North (1819).

with the advantages thus forcibly brought home to them, 'they thanked his lordship, as for a singular good done them'. In the old days the nuisance might have continued indefinitely; in the new, resolution could be harnessed to reform, and many stages accomplished on the road towards acceptable standards of living.

Under the influence of modern problems the conditions so far discussed have been almost ignored, and interest in the rebuilding focused on the width of the streets. Criticism has been lavished on the blindness of those who refused to create one-hundred-foot thoroughfares and sanctioned lanes barely fourteen feet wide. Whether such reproaches are justified from a generation which has accepted the planning of modern suburbs and notoriously failed to deal intelligently with either aerodromes or bridges is perhaps beside the point. What is clear is that each age must be judged tolerantly in the light of the possibilities facing it. Thus when considering the street programme of 1667 it must always be remembered that the age of the rebuilding had refused to accept the idea of a further increase in the size of London, and was as prejudiced in favour of traffic by water as 1939 is in favour of that by road. The coach and the dray, though they had come for good, were still resented as intruders. Ticket-porters and boatmen joined with the inhabitants of the narrow lanes in condemning them as unsuited to the conditions of the city. So they were, but those who sat in judgment did not realize that London had just begun the still unfinished process of adapting her streets to the needs of a traffic commensurate with her growth. For hundreds of years the houses had been gradually creeping inwards on to those streets. Encroachments, authorized or unauthorized, had progressively narrowed thoroughfares once generous enough. Before the advent of coaches and suburbs there was no great reason to stop a process which in the seventeenth century developed into a problem of rapidly increasing urgency. The common suggestion that the rebuilders blinked the matter is untrue. They were not able to see it in the form assumed

after growth had continued for another century, or to deal with it as they had designed before calculating the costs, but they did see that change was imperative and they did make a substantial advance towards it. They began by staying the tide of encroachment all through the 'burnt' area, and they went on in many places to win back ground that had been lost. The building lines they established made it possible for the first time since the Romans to walk along a street without being forced out to avoid a pillar, a buttress, or a whole house projecting beyond the general level. The streets '*were* built as *streets* with some definite line of frontage and not as *footways* to and from individual houses'.<sup>1</sup> The new houses were given limits, and despite the efforts of such men as Selby, they were confined to them. To-day such things are taken for granted, but to the city of that day they were an achievement.

This accomplishment helped on further reforms. Order and control had come in together, and in later years they secured to pedestrians the safety of universal foot-paths, and to wheeled traffic the convenience of gutters down the sides of the carriage-way instead of along its centre. For the moment, however, they were little more than the necessary preliminary to an attack on the evils of narrow streets and scarcely passable lanes. The first ineffectual shots in this attack had been fired at the outset of the Restoration, but, though voluntary gifts, accumulated over centuries, served to maintain London Bridge, they were not the best way of dealing with London traffic blocks. The Fire provided an opportunity for substituting something more drastic. The first survey ever made of the city was taken and used as a basis for general and constructive amendment. This was confined strictly to the practical. Utopian hundred-foot roads were abandoned at an early stage, but the idea of improvement survived. The survey demonstrated how it might best be carried out, and on it was based a double scheme. The first and least spectacular section dealt with the lanes and the side streets.

<sup>1</sup> Harben, *op cit.*, p. xii.

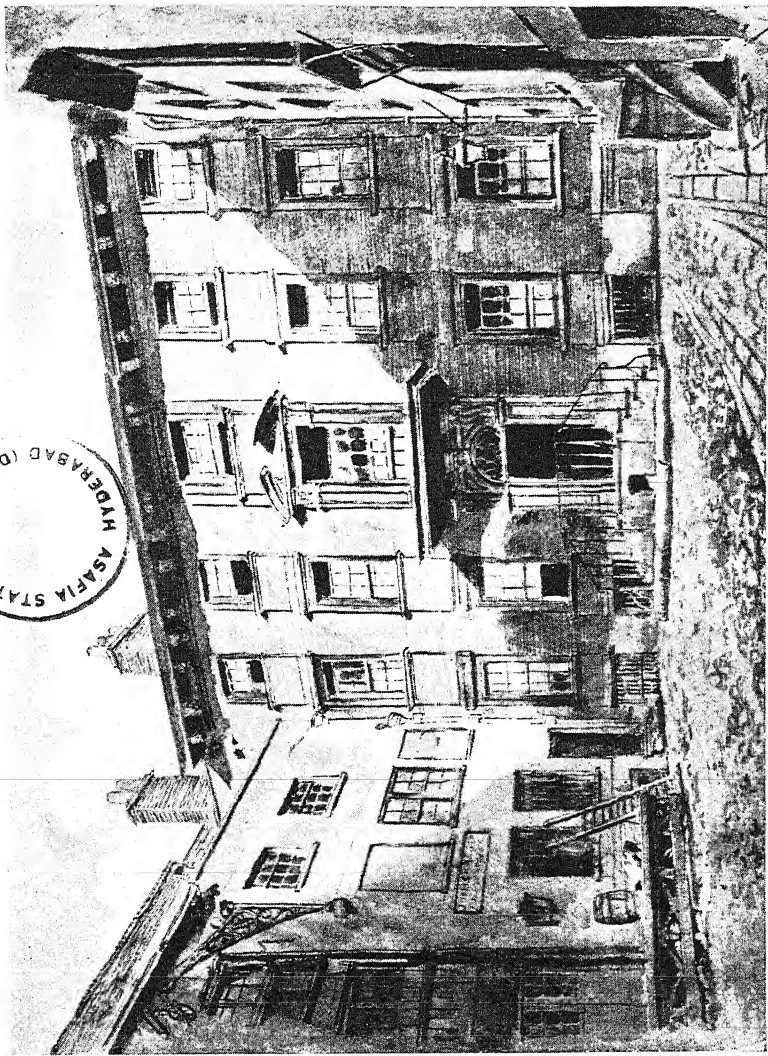
## THE REBUILDING OF LONDON

With comparatively few exceptions these were allotted a minimum width of fourteen feet<sup>1</sup> — sufficient to allow drays to pass each other without danger to the houses on either side. Inadequate though this may sound, the extent to which it was an improvement can be judged from the thousands of pounds spent, at five shillings a square foot, in order to comply with it. In lane after lane the frontages were set back, and in many they have remained unaltered from that day to this. If anyone has the curiosity to measure, say Ironmonger, Beer or Cross Lanes, he will find that each is still a foot short of five paces from wall to wall.

The second part of the scheme covered the chief traffic routes. Widening was its main, but not its sole, concern, for it included an ambitious attempt to reduce gradients formidable to horse-drawn vehicles and a simpler project for limiting the obstruction caused by the conduits. Summed up it sought to provide easy routes for traffic coming to the city either by water or by land. On the south and west, where the roads climbed steeply from the Thames and the Fleet, and the influx from Westminster, the river, and the Surrey side had all to be accommodated, widening and reduction of gradients were combined. To the north, where the traffic was smaller and the levels presented no obstacles, the changes were few. Thus the western entry through Ludgate was made forty-five feet wide, from the bottleneck by St. Bride's, up Ludgate Hill, to St. Paul's churchyard. The gate itself was rebuilt with two posterns, the dip down to the crossing of the Fleet was reduced by raising the bridge and its approaches, and the rise to the cathedral was

<sup>1</sup> During April 1667 the surveyors were busy with reports on the network of alleys and passages which had connected courts and back houses with the streets. Many of these they considered unfit to be opened up, some being culs-de-sac, some not open to vehicles and others having no public right of way through them. In Thames Street were a batch leading down to the Quays. 'Too Little Lane only a foot passage staked out but fit to be let alone' and Blackby Alley, a privately owned cut, less than 6 feet wide at its mouth, dwindling at the end of 40 yards to a bare 4½, will serve as examples. These were not included in the categories widened to 14 feet (see *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 84, Mills I, *passim*). Other exceptions are shown in the act of Common Council of April 29th, 1667.





A house in Botolph Lane built soon after the Fire  
From a drawing by Hanslip Fletcher

made easier.<sup>1</sup> On the western edge of the city, beyond the limits of the Fire, the widening of Temple Bar brought this improvement to completion.<sup>2</sup> The north bank of the Thames was treated in the same way. The waterfront was raised three feet, Thames Street enlarged to take the heavy carts from the wharves,<sup>3</sup> and Water Lane, St. Dunstan's and St. Mary's Hills<sup>4</sup> to carry them on into the streets above. The Bridge foot and its approach down Gracechurch Street and Fish Street Hill were opened out to thirty-five feet, and lane after lane brought up to the standard fourteen. To complete the work, the steep ascent from Thames Street to the variously named thoroughfare north of it was abated all the way from Tower Dock to St. Andrew's Hill. Even to-day this rise is sharp and the stone setts in the lanes above Billingsgate draw sparks from the shoes of the dray horses as they struggle up to Eastcheap. Then it must have been formidable. Adjusting the drop along the new Queen Street caused such complications that the second Act had to devote special clauses to unravelling them, and Pepys went to Fish Street Hill on purpose to 'see how very fine a descent they have now made', noting afterwards how 'very easy and pleasant'<sup>5</sup> it had become.

This area benefited also from the creation of Queen Street. Though the desire for an impressive approach to the Guildhall may have had more to do with its authorization than

<sup>1</sup> Rules and Directions for Pitching and Levelling the Streets and Lanes of the City of London issued by the commissioners of sewers and pavements: (*Guildhall Lib.*, Broad-sides, 12. 91). This is also the reference for the altered gradients above Thames Street.

<sup>2</sup> This was entirely due to Charles, or his prompters. The City, already frightened by the cost of rebuilding, did their best to avoid it. Charles ordered the Commissioners at Scotland Yard to grant £1500 towards the cost, and forced the City to act: (*Reper.*, 75, ff. 199v, 243v *et seq.*).

<sup>3</sup> Under the first Act the section from St. Magnus's Church to Tower Dock was made 30 feet. On May 14th, 1667, the City instructed the surveyors to widen the western section to 20 feet where this could conveniently be done, and the second Act added the necessary authority.

<sup>4</sup> The first and third were made 20 feet by order of the Court of Aldermen given on May 16th, 1667: (*Reper.*, 72, f. 108). The second was 24 feet in accordance with s. 40 of the first Act.

<sup>5</sup> *Diary*, August 22nd, 1668.



strict concern for traffic, it played a valuable part in relieving the pressure on Dowgate and Queenhythe. A clear route, twenty-four feet wide, from the centre of the city to Thames Street and the waterfront below it, was a boon to traffic on foot and on wheels alike. The lanes were relieved and, as Ogilby shows, the boatmen knew its stairs as a sure place for custom.

Newgate, the north-western entry, was less effectually treated. The approach was longer, and perhaps for that reason the gradient was left untouched. The bridge was enlarged 'to run straight on a Bevil line from the timber house on the north side thereof knowne by the sign of the Cocke to the front of the buildings at the Swan Inne on the . . . north side of Holborne hill',<sup>1</sup> the entry to the gate was improved, and a postern cut on the north of it,<sup>2</sup> but the problem of Snow Hill was not satisfactorily solved until the construction of Holborn Viaduct less than eighty years ago. The changes thus made were valuable, though they did not reach the standard of completeness set at Ludgate.

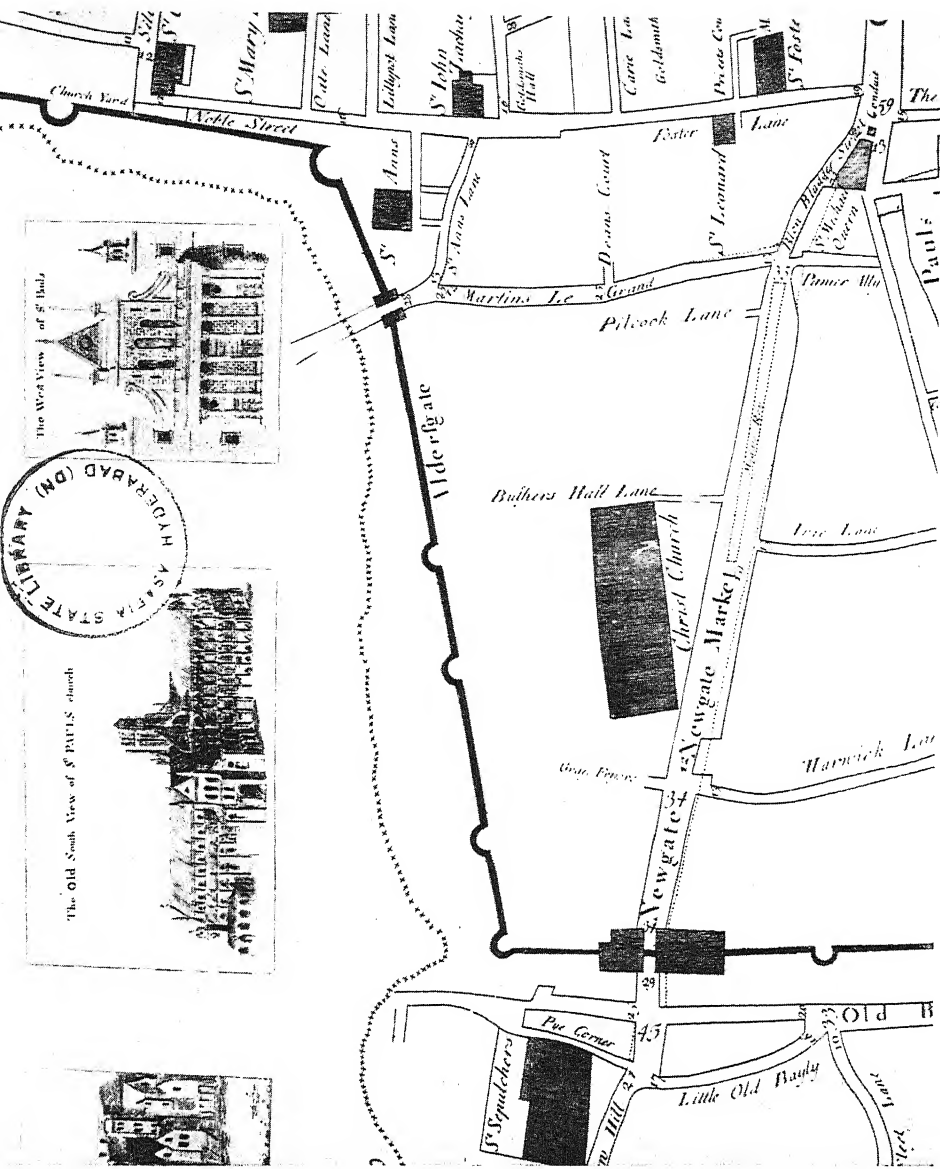
The improvements in the approaches were carried on into the heart of the city proper. Widening south and east of St. Paul's, coupled with the opening out of the gateway by the former Jesus Steeple, took the access from Ludgate northwards into Cheapside. Enlargements at St. Austin's Gate and along the line of Watling Street, Budge Row and the two Eastcheaps carried it eastwards through the whole length of the city to the Tower itself.<sup>3</sup> Sir John Robinson, 'a vain prating, boasting man as any I know',<sup>4</sup> took to himself the credit for this lower route, though whether he was entitled to it does not appear. The other extension, after reaching Cheapside, joined across the site of St. Michael le Quern with the Newgate approach. There, the removal of the houses on the salient by Warwick Lane, the obliteration of the middle row in Newgate Market,

<sup>1</sup> Act of Common Council of April 29th, 1667.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., and Oliver's report in *Guildhall Lib.*, MS. 84, I, f. 6.

<sup>3</sup> From St. Austin's Gate to the Tower the minimum width was scheduled as 20 feet: (*Repert.*, 72, f. 95).

<sup>4</sup> *Pepys's Diary*, May 5th, 1667.



The entry through Newgate

From Vertue's engraving of 'John Leake's' map

and the use of a large slice from the south side of Blowbladder Street<sup>1</sup> opened a great thoroughfare from the Wall to the eastern end of Cheapside. Enlargement of The Poultry, the demolition of the Stocks building, and widening on the south side of Cornhill<sup>2</sup> carried it on unobstructed to Leadenhall. There the burnt area came to an end, but the last stretch ran broad and clear to Aldgate,<sup>3</sup> giving the city a second complete east to west route.

North and south needed and possessed fewer through roads. Traffic to the northern suburbs was less important than that towards Westminster, and the long-distance coaches were not yet numerous enough to cause difficulties. Aldersgate was well served outside the Walls, and inside them the City could still declare that St. Martin's le Grand was 'none of the great Streetes'.<sup>4</sup> True, it was widened to eighteen feet, but the six additional feet which had originally been assigned to it were ungrudgingly sacrificed to end a serious threat to the progress of rebuilding in that area. Whitechapel was likewise well provided for. Fenchurch and Leadenhall Streets, helped by the improvements already described, easily met the needs of the traffic going in and out via Aldgate. St. Gabriel's Church, the only serious obstacle, was burnt in the Fire and not rebuilt. London Bridge, however, as the only road link between the city and the southern bank, had a special importance. The nearest alternative crossing was at Kingston, a full eleven miles away, and for London and Southwark the old bridge still reigned supreme. The improvements already sketched were a striking advance, and they were duly completed by widening at the corner of Gracechurch Street and Cornhill. This made an easy road, thirty-five feet wide, from the river to Bishopsgate, opening the eastern half of the city and connecting the wharves

<sup>1</sup> The prescribed width of 40 feet was somewhat reduced at the petition of the owners of the frontages.

<sup>2</sup> This whole section was made 40 feet wide.

<sup>3</sup> Leadenhall Street was described by Styrpe as 'well inhabited, a great Thoroughfare', and Aldgate Street as 'broad, but short': (op. cit., bk II, pp. 81, 82).

<sup>4</sup> *P.C. Reg.*, 2/60, p. 262. See this volume and 2/59 *passim* for the course of the whole dispute.

with the main east-west routes. Plans for rebuilding the bridge itself were made but not carried through,<sup>1</sup> though the press of carts using it led within twenty years to the widening of the roadway over it. Farther west, the new streets connecting Guildhall with the river joined Thames Street, Watling Street and Cheapside, and, just inside the Wall, a rather half-hearted series of improvements linked Newgate Street with Ludgate Hill, Puddle Dock and the stairs at Blackfriars.<sup>2</sup>

One other major change is worth distinguishing. The alterations by the Royal Exchange gave that corner for the first time an importance equal to that which it now holds. The widening of its approaches, the addition of Princes Street, the scheduling of the Poultry, Cornhill, and Lombard Street as 'High Streets', and the demolition of the 'Stocks', had combined to make it at once 'mighty noble'<sup>3</sup> and a mighty centre of traffic. A regular 'city' quarter was created, and numbers of 'Goldsmiths, Bankers, Merchants and other eminent Tradesmen'<sup>4</sup> acquired houses in its neighbourhood. The 'Bourse', rebuilt, enlarged and freed from contiguous buildings, received a site worthy of its importance. London had not yet reached equality with Amsterdam, but the established refugees from France, the steadily increasing inflow of Jews, and the growing community of rich native merchants were about to make this rebuilt 'city' quarter a rival worthy of Dutch consideration.

The city was thus sectionalized, each section being intersected by main streets, which, in turn, were served by improved and standardized by-streets. A mass of other minor changes, too small to analyse, too numerous to catalogue, added to the general improvement. The whole is unassessable, and, indeed, cannot be assessed in terms of streets alone. Lay-out and transport facilities both depended on the rivers almost as much as

<sup>1</sup> C.L.O., 1671-74, f. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Warwick Lane was enlarged, Ave Mary Lane made 18 feet and various improvements carried out along the remainder of the route. The lower part, at least, was much used, Styrpe describing Creed Lane as a place 'pestered with Carts and Cars to *Puddle Dock*, and other Wharfs on the Water side': (op. cit., bk 3, p. 194).

<sup>3</sup> *Pepys's Diary*, September 16th, 1668.

<sup>4</sup> Styrpe's *Stow*, bk. II, p. 162b.



the land. The Fleet scheme and the changes in the quays must be taken into account. Both have been sketched. Barges and lighters, through their agency, were intended to take an even greater share in the city's transport. They failed, and the importance of the up-river quays declined, but it is worth remembering that the Fleet Canal was expected to do for the western liberties what the road from London Bridge to Bishopsgate did for the east.

The Fleet scheme had a further importance. The growth of the city and the expansion of its trade had at once increased the need for storage facilities and diminished the space available for that purpose. The quays along the new canal, and the great vaults constructed beneath them, were intended to supplement this deficiency. To some extent they did, but in general 'that project did not take'. The same idea inspired the clause in the 'Paving and Cleansing' Act of 1671,<sup>1</sup> under which the City was authorized to set out and purchase 'ground for common laystalls and for public stores, for all sorts of fuel, and for all sorts of materials for pitching, paving and cleansing the streets, and for other commodities for public use'.<sup>2</sup> This was acted upon, and the coal duës were used to pay for land alongside Dowgate, Puddle and Whitefriars Docks, and near the fort built during the Civil War by Mile End Green. When bought these sites were fitted up to serve as much needed laystalls,<sup>3</sup> thus facilitating the cleansing of the streets and helping with the perennial problem of the disposal of refuse. Neither problem was solved, for collectors and householders were equally ready to evade regulations, and unprotected ground soon suffered the fate of the site in Priest's Alley which 'haveing layne soe long unbuilt and there being noe other ground unbuilt neare it' was surreptitiously used by the neighbouring

<sup>1</sup> 22 & 23 Charles II, c. 17, ss. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> See the act of Common Council which put the statute into force: (*For.*, 47, f. 146v *et seq.*, and Birch, *op. cit.*, p. 235 *et seq.*).

<sup>3</sup> Laystalls were the depositories, *inter alia*, for the sweepings from the streets, the refuse and ashes from the houses, and the oils, dirt and dung from inns, stables and places of trade (breweries, soap-boilings, etc.) in the various Wards.

houses as 'a Common Laystall for dirt and Rubbish'.<sup>1</sup> Yet the increased facilities reduced the incentive to challenge the rules. The new streets were easier to clean, the alleys fewer and less impenetrable, and the drivers of the dirt carts with their wooden clappers had less occasion for conniving at breaches. The laystalls were now adequate, besides being better situated, and the bargees who fetched their contents from the waterside to the market gardens at Chelsea and Fulham, Battersea and Putney, had no cause to grumble over inadequate cargoes.<sup>2</sup>

Drainage and flooding were also considered at the rebuilding. Not only were the new houses connected more readily with the channels, but with the help of the rubble the levels of the streets were altered to allow surface water to be drained away.<sup>3</sup> Gracechurch Street, Cheapside and Cornhill were amongst those amended, and, as Mr. Perks has shown, the site of the Stocks building was lowered by as much as two feet.<sup>4</sup> Along the river the rubble also played a part. There the wharves were raised above the level of the highest spring tides, thus ending a danger that still troubles the low-lying areas above Westminster. Forgotten and unspectacular, such work contributed nothing to London's outward magnificence, though it must have played its part in improving the health and well-being of her inhabitants.

Much more spectacular was the change in the market system. The medieval town, ever preoccupied with problems of supply, consistently sought to draw the country producer into direct contact with the citizen householder. The former was compelled by market monopolies and other methods to bring his foodstuffs into the town and to sell them there under a system elaborately regulated in the interests of the private buyer. London had been no exception to this policy, and, though by

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MS. 5103, f. 235. The alley was by Tower Dock, in the parish of All Hallows Barking.

<sup>2</sup> J. Norden, writing in 1610, declared that this had 'of late' become a regular practice: (*The Surveyors Dialogue* (1610), p. 191).

<sup>3</sup> *Guildhall Lib.*, Broad-sides, 12. 91.

<sup>4</sup> S. Perks, *The History of the Mansion House* (1922), pp. 114-15.

the seventeenth century it was breaking down so far as she was concerned,<sup>1</sup> much remained unchanged. Middlemen were playing an increasingly important part, and the control of the authorities over prices was diminishing,<sup>2</sup> but the country vendors still came into the city and the private householders still regarded them as a main source of supply. For the most part, these vendors sold from standings in the streets, sometimes, as at Leadenhall, because the market place was not large enough, sometimes, as in Newgate, because that was the traditional place. In either case, the result was 'very incommodious . . . to the Market People as well as to the Passengers'.<sup>3</sup> With the growth of the city the overflow grew worse and market streets more thronged. The accompanying increase in the use of coaches and carts made matters still more intolerable. At Leadenhall the country butchers were a nuisance; at the Stocks the market building made a bad bottleneck worse; in Cheapside the stalls, ranged along the sides, were less of an obstacle, but Newgate more than restored the balance. There the Meal Market blocked the very centre of an otherwise wide thoroughfare, while 'the Country People which brought provisions to the City, were forced to stand with their Stalls in the open Street; to the Damage of their Goods, and Danger of their Persons, by the Coaches, Carts, Horses, and Cattle, that passed through'.<sup>4</sup> All this accorded ill with officials in coaches, impatient to keep their appointments, and many besides Pepys must have knocked goods from stalls and escaped the poorer from the resultant fracas.

If traffic was to continue, the markets had to be moved. They were. In the new city they were given definite market

<sup>1</sup> See F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of the London Food Market, 1540-1640', in *The Economic History Review*, v, No. 2 (1935).

<sup>2</sup> The mayoral proclamations fixing prices were diminishing in number and efficacy. The last in respect, for example, of poultry and rabbits, is dated February 12th, 1634, and in this the King had a hand: (*For.*, 36, f. 225). This did not mean, however, a weakening in the belief that the citizen had a right to obtain supplies for his legitimate work at reasonable prices. Any hint of engrossing or of denial of supply moved the City to vigorous action.

<sup>3</sup> Strype's *Stow*, bk. II, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. III, p. 195.



places, set back from the main thoroughfares, but well served by approach streets. At Leadenhall more ground was bought and all the vendors accommodated. At the Stocks the old building was demolished and the market moved back on to the sites of St. Mary Woolchurch and the houses next to it. Cheap-side gave way to Honey Lane, and Newgate carried its old name to a specially created square close by. Buying the necessary land gave the City much trouble. Interests were mixed, melioration hard to assess, and the standard five shillings per square foot inapplicable. Honey Lane involved twenty-two separate payments, Leadenhall a complicated exchange of property, Newgate the dispute with Amhurst. But the results justified it. The surveyors produced spacious and seemly buildings for the market people, and the traffic in the new streets passed free and unobstructed.

No single one of the improvements sketched can be described as spectacular. London had become a citizens' city, and, conscious that she was recovering from a catastrophe and must pay for whatever she did, had none of the absolute monarch's inclination towards the grandiose. The imprint of these two facts is unmistakable. The changes were far-reaching, but utilitarian. The rebuilt area had its splendour, but it was the sober splendour of the Dutch towns — exemplars of burgherdom — of row upon row of seemly, well-built brick houses, with none of the eye-arresting magnificence of royal palaces, great courts of law, or the town houses of a rich nobility. The parish churches, its finest adornment, owed their beauty almost to an accident. No effort was made to site them to greater advantage. With scarcely an exception they were rebuilt on their old foundations, occasionally even as copies of those destroyed.<sup>1</sup> Monuments of pious conservatism,

<sup>1</sup> St. Mary le Bow was enlarged and its steeple does not occupy the site of the former tower. St. Margaret Pattens bought a small strip of land so that the shape of the church could be improved. But, as Dr. Philip Norman showed, the charred walls and the foundations of the former churches were normally incorporated in the new, and the ground plan rarely varied appreciably. St. Mary Aldermary and the tower of St. Michael, Cornhill, both resemble the buildings which had been burnt.

they might well have been dull or mediocre. Only the chance genius of one man raised them to a splendour undreamt of by their parishioners. St. Paul's Cathedral, loyally supported from within the Walls, but dictated from without, was the only building which could challenge Europe.

Yet the results of the restoration probably justified Pepys's wish, noted after an evening spent in reading the first of the Rebuilding Acts, 'I pray to God that I may live to see it built in that manner'.<sup>1</sup> He, not Evelyn, was the Londoner, knowing from experience where the shoe pinched. Reading the Act as an inhabitant, he gave praise accordingly. The pity is that he could not have been banished in the spring of 1667 and not allowed to return until ten years later. Then we might have had a description of the merits of the new city from the pen of a true Cockney. As it is 'those who lived through the rebuilding saw it as a gradual process, and so lost the effect, whilst the few travellers whose impressions have been recorded lacked knowledge of London before the Fire'.<sup>2</sup> Two contrasts may illustrate the changes. One is to be found in the surveys.<sup>3</sup> Thames Street and Threadneedle Street no longer dwindled to a bare eleven feet from house front to house front; Gracechurch Street and Ludgate Hill were thirty-five and forty-five feet at their narrowest, not sixteen and seventeen. Another appears in the Bills of Mortality. The outbreaks of plague which had terrorized the old city scarcely troubled the new. For nearly a century no child had been able to hope to reach manhood without surviving one such visitation. In the outbreak of 1665 alone, nearly a seventh of those within the Walls had died. After the Fire such ravages were unknown until the appearance of cholera in the nineteenth century. Examples could be multiplied, but, failing a contemporary contrast, Dr. Woodward, lecturer at Gresham College, must sum up for the

<sup>1</sup> *Diary*, February 19th, 1667.

<sup>2</sup> *The Town Planning Review*, op. cit., p. 278.

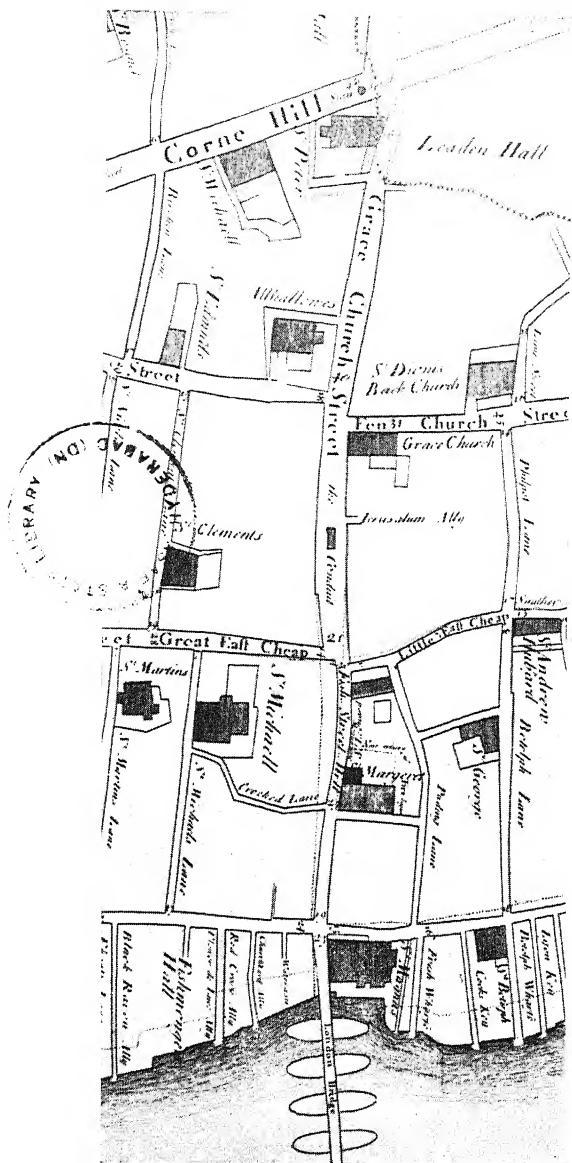
<sup>3</sup> John Leake's 'Exact Surveigh . . .' (B.M., Add. MS. 5415, E 1). In George Vertue's engraving, made in 1722, Newgate Market is shown as only 12 feet wide at the salient by Warwick Lane, but the manuscript does not appear to support this.

new city. In a letter to Wren himself, he first congratulated him on the part he had played in its building and then went on to say that, as a result of the reconstruction, the Fire 'however disastrous it might be to the then inhabitants, had prov'd infinitely beneficial to their Posterity; conducing vastly to the Improvement and Increase, as well of the Riches and Opulency, as of the Splendor of this City. Then, which I and every Body must observe with great Satisfaction, by means of the Inlargements of the Streets; of the great Plenty of good Water, convey'd to all Parts; of the common Sewers, and other like Contrivances, such Provision is made for a free Access and Passage of the Air, for Sweetness, for Cleanness, and for Salubrity, that it is not only the finest, but the most healthy City in the World'.<sup>1</sup> Better housed, better drained, better administered, freed from Fire and Plague, brought into line with the needs of its own growth, the new city was in all things an improvement on its predecessor. It was not the dream creation of any one architect, but to its citizens it was, as Woodward said, a better place in which to live. There can be few planners who would not accept with pleasure such a verdict on their work.

So ends the story of the rebuilding. The note is triumphant. The Guildhall is restored; the Lord Mayor in state — the citizens opening their purses for loans to the Crown, Vyner entertaining the King. The epilogue is tragedy. Before the City's programme had been completed, before that of the churches had reached its half-way mark, the authorities realized that they had a second problem to face. The houses were there, but the people were not returning to fill them. Eighty thousand had fled before the flames. At the end of 1672 a quarter had still to come back. Seriously perturbed, the City took a census.<sup>2</sup> Ward by ward, they considered the returns. 961 houses were still unstarted, 142 in Vintry, 197 in Castle Baynard, 200 in

<sup>1</sup> John Woodward, M.D., *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> The order to take it was given on January 23rd, 1673: (*Jor.*, 47, f. 244). The return is in *P.R.O.*, *S.P. Dom.*, Charles II, 333, No. 49.



The entry via London Bridge  
 From Vertue's engraving of 'John Leake's' map

Farringdon Without. Such gaps were ominous, if not unexpected. The tale of houses built and uninhabited was much more serious. There were 3423 of them, 'near the sixth part of the whole City and Liberties'. The reasons were not far to seek. Long before the Fire irksome restrictions and liability to burdensome offices had driven men to set up in the freedom of the suburbs. As the handicraft tailors said, it was 'but two doors away' and they would find many of their friends there already.<sup>1</sup> 'The great Inequality and Disproportion of Taxes both in Houses and Personal Estates between the City of *London*, and the Out-Parishes of *Middlesex*, within the Bills of Mortality',<sup>2</sup> had worked to the same end. The City had long complained that its strength was 'running out at the gates', and the rebuilding had done little to stop the process. The burdens had actually increased. New paving and new drains had to be paid for, tithe was re-assessed and raised, the new churches had to be furnished. Wards and precincts, parishes and Companies, were all busy to the same purpose, levying and begging, without mercy and without end.<sup>3</sup> The city had certainly become a better place in which to live, but equally certainly it had not become a better place in which to earn a livelihood.

The reasons given caused many not to return. Others were tied by the houses they had leased. Still more had established themselves in new centres of trade, and prospering, preferred to remain. The City spoke truly when it lamented 'The withdrawing . . . of several Inhabitants, to the Increase of Trade where they are gone and the Loss of it within the City'.<sup>4</sup> Importers and wholesalers could only leave if they were ready to go to some other centre. Retailers could move a bare mile and find prosperity. Linen-drapers and the like paid less and took

<sup>1</sup> *For.*, 49, f. 277v.

<sup>2</sup> 'Reasons humbly offered to the Parliament for the abatement of the proportion of the Assessment upon The City of London': (*Guildhall Lib.*, Broad-sides 21. 48).

<sup>3</sup> The coal duty paid only for the fabric of the churches. The altar, font, pews, lectern, etc., had to be provided by the parish. Various methods were used for raising the large sums required, the commonest being a combination of gifts, and parochial rates levied according to the poor roll.

<sup>4</sup> 'Reasons humbly offered . . .' cited above.

more in the Strand. Paternoster Row 'before the Fire . . . was taken up by eminent Mercers, Silk-men, and Lacemen' whose 'Shops were so resorted unto by the Nobility and Gentry, in their Coaches, that oft times the Street was so stop'd up, that there was no passage for Foot Passengers'. But, after the Fire they 'settled themselves in several other Parts; especially in *Covent Garden*, in *Bedford Street*, *Henrietta Street*, and *King Street*'<sup>1</sup> to return no more. The poor who had crowded the mean courts and rickety tenements of the worst parts of the old city had also stayed behind. New brick houses were far beyond their means, and they had perforce to remain in the unregulated cottage properties lying north, south and east beyond the City's jurisdiction. The poor were not lamented, the others were a serious loss.

It is hard to say how soon the City realized what was happening. Possibly it was not until the census of 1673. To those who had thought for years in terms of rebuilding, houses and buildings inevitably loomed largest. As the months reduced the work to be done, the truth grew plainer. The census made it unmistakable. From then onwards the problem of empty houses replaced that of empty spaces, and pride in the achievement of rebuilding gave way to anxiety about repeopling.

The City, realizing the danger of its position, acted with unusual speed. Complaints that taxes were insufficient and work undone because of the difficulties of collection from uninhabited houses could not long be ignored. A Bill was drafted to make it harder for the owners of tofts and uninhabited houses to escape payment of rates,<sup>2</sup> and a special committee sat publicly to consider the state of the city.<sup>3</sup> Its agenda was wide — the grievances under which the city laboured and the remedies that ought to be applied — but in twelve days its report was ready for the Common Council. The grievances

<sup>1</sup> Strype's *Stow*, bk. III, p. 195b.

<sup>2</sup> *Jor.*, 47, f. 255; also *P.R.O.*, *S.P. Dom.*, Charles II, 360, No. 170.

<sup>3</sup> *Jor.*, 47, ff. 254, 262.

were many, but the recommendations turned mainly on how to fill the uninhabited houses. Measures to compel and measures to attract were about equally blended. Aldermen living outside the city were to return to it, as law and custom demanded. Their bad example was giving countenance to divers others, and had already brought complaint from the King.<sup>1</sup> Deputies and Common Councilmen were to do the same. Less conspicuous people could not be tackled without more information. The Companies were therefore to make a return of members living outside, and of such of their freemen as were not also free of the city. In future the second class were to be notified to the Chamberlain on the day they took their oath. Measures of encouragement followed. For one year all persons approved by the Court who took a house and dwelt in the new buildings, should, it was suggested, be admitted gratis into the freedom of the city, paying only the usual fees to officers. Admission to any Company that thought fit to receive them ought to follow. This, a present of at least twenty pounds in actual cash, compared with pre-Fire days, and an easy way from difficulties to privilege, was calculated to encourage waverers of the middle orders. A second concession was directed towards the great ones for whom the City was ever eager. For the next seven years those admitted to the freedom were to be exempted from the offices of Alderman and Sheriff for a like period after their admission.

This second concession was too large a pill for the City to swallow, but the exigency was such that the first was adopted. Since the New Year a handful of strangers had applied for the freedom, mostly in order to live in the new houses.<sup>2</sup> A button maker from Gloucester, a merchant taylor from York, an Oxford apothecary, a trader in Indian gowns moving from the suburbs to Ludgate Hill — such men, if carefully chosen, would have been strong candidates at all times. In 1673 they were manna from heaven. The City regarded them as such.

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 78, f. 115v.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

It dropped the price of freedom by purchase to seven nobles,<sup>1</sup> ordered the prosecution as foreigners of 'diverse persons Traders that have taken houses and inhabitte within this Citty' to be dropped,<sup>2</sup> and opened its doors to all who would come in. The results justified the sacrifice. Slowly at first, and then in increasing numbers, applicants came forward. To prevent abuses they were required to furnish certificates showing that they were genuinely moving in from outside the city, but, having ventured, the authorities did not turn back. Countenance was given to Companies prepared to seek out those of their trade living outside 'the freedom of this City and . . . not freemen who might be persuaded to come in and take their freedom',<sup>3</sup> and the Merchant Taylors, who were reported to be making excessive and unreasonable demands on applicants for admission, were at once summoned to answer for their conduct.<sup>4</sup>

The encouragement given to this class reacted on another. The country craftsman, working on the rebuilding by the protection of the first Act, had already begun to invest his profits and to safeguard his future by purchasing the freedom. Hostile Companies could, as he well knëw, make his position precarious, whatever the Act might say, and to those who had brought families or gained valuable trade connections citizenship was almost essential. The first applicant of this class, a plasterer, appeared in February 1670. In March eight more were presented by the Plasterers' Company itself, and in April

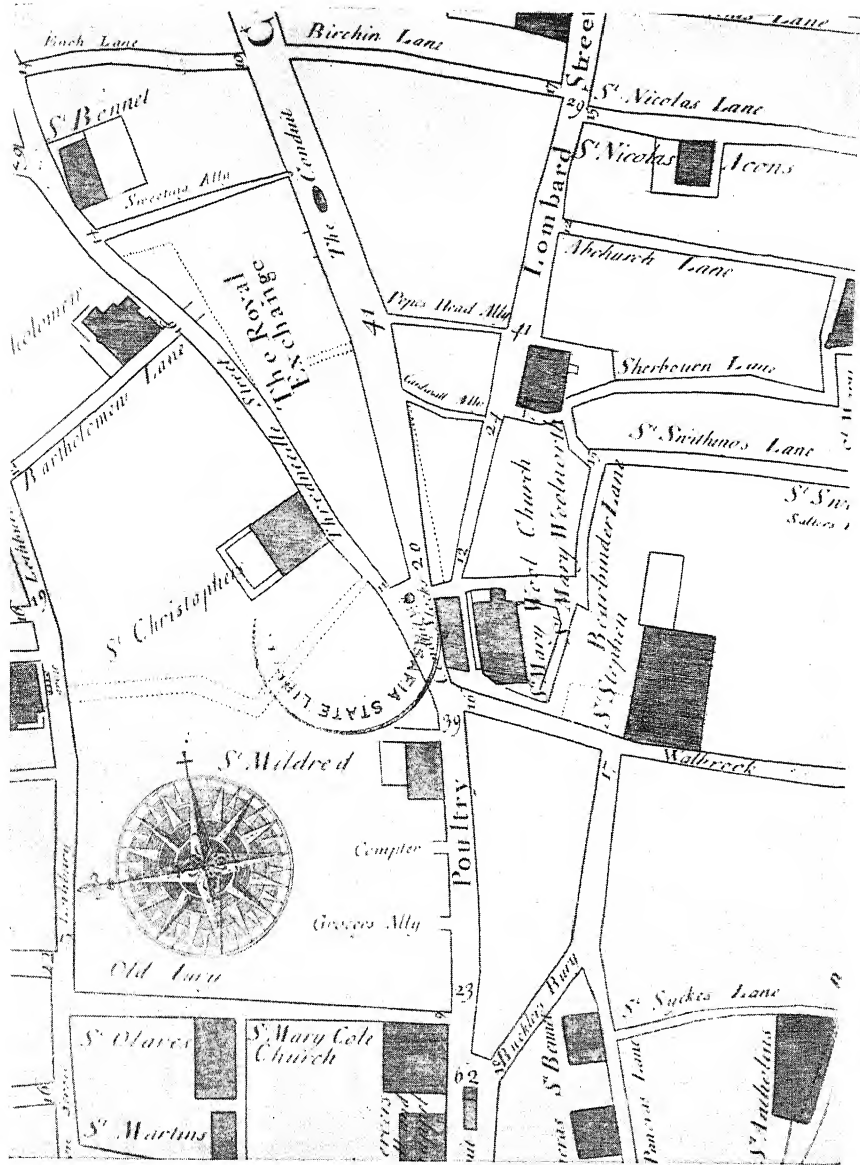
<sup>1</sup> Where small payments had to be made the City still thought in terms of nobles and marks, and I have used the instance to illustrate the fact. No actual fee was laid down and, when more could be asked, it was. Seven nobles was the usual figure, with more than a sprinkling of admissions at ten.

<sup>2</sup> *Repert.*, 78, f. 155v.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 79, f. 344. Some of the smaller Companies were seriously short of members at this period, and were having difficulty in finding enough to bear office and to maintain their funds. The City granted several the right to present satisfactory persons to be made free by redemption, reducing the price to help them. At various times during the years 1670-76 the Glovers were granted 26, the Silk-throwers 20, the Tobacco Pipe-makers and the Feltmakers 12 each, and the Needle-makers no less than 48. I have not attempted to trace out whether all the places granted were filled, but the majority certainly were.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 79, f. 1v.





'The modern 'Bank Corner' before the post-fire improvements

From Vertue's engraving of 'John Leake's' map



the Carpenters followed suit with three of their craft.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, after the Companies seem to have lost interest. The craftsmen, however, faced with molestation under the guise of inquiries into their credentials, applied in increasing numbers.<sup>2</sup> A charge of £10, plus fees, plus the Companies' charges and fees,<sup>3</sup> made a formidable total for a workman paid perhaps fifteen shillings a week. Some of that rank did come in, but the names suggest that the majority was drawn from the rising class of contractors. John Fitch and Isaac Skelton,<sup>4</sup> familiar figures in the City's accounts; the founders of mason dynasties of St. Paul's, Thomas Strong and Thomas Wise; Matthew Williams and Christopher Kempster, Ralph Cadman and John Coombs — these were responsible men, well able to pay for their admission. For nearly three years the stream was steady. Thereafter it dwindled, and by the time of the general opening it was definitely failing.<sup>5</sup> The reduction in the fee tapped another stratum, and restarted it. The mayoral year 1673-74 saw the acceptance of 194 country craftsmen and 290 of those taking new houses.<sup>6</sup> By analogy or design the concessions were soon extended to those prepared to take houses anywhere within the city, and in one day no less than forty-six freedoms were sold.<sup>7</sup>

The conservatives groaned, but it was the only way by which the empty houses could be filled and the chamber, at

<sup>1</sup> *Repert.*, 75, ff. 127, 158.

<sup>2</sup> The building crafts were adopting the only course open to them — that of searching out the qualifications of the immigrant workmen. This harassed the qualified and opened the unqualified to prosecution (see *Repert.*, 75, ff. 65, 88v, 187v, 207).

<sup>3</sup> These varied with the Company. The Masons' charge was raised in 1673 from 23s. 10d. to 36s., the Blacksmiths' seems to have been smaller. The City's charge to these men was sometimes less than £10, never more.

<sup>4</sup> Skelton was able to lend £200 to the City.

<sup>5</sup> By that time more than 350 had been accepted. How far they occupied new houses cannot be ascertained. Those settled before 1670 were unlikely to have done so.

<sup>6</sup> I have tried to discover what proportion of those who were accepted failed to complete the transaction. The records in the book of 'Recognisances of Redemptions' are not quite complete and the writing is exceptionally difficult, but they serve to show that the proportion was small. As I have excluded all borderline cases from the figures given, they may be taken as the minimum.

<sup>7</sup> March 5th, 1674, *Repert.*, 79, f. 126v *et seq.*

least, benefited from the fees.<sup>1</sup> Even so, it was not enough. A fresh attempt had to be made to induce or to compel Aldermen and citizens to return from the suburbs. Most of the absentees among the former returned during the following year, and in that year there was a continued though diminishing influx from outside. At the end of it the Court of Aldermen debated the position. Officers formerly rewarded with grants of freedoms to sell were asking for money in lieu thereof. The Court agreed that such grants had become of little value by reason of 'the late generall admission . . . which hath been conceived to bee of good use in the present exigency and one meanes to repeople this Citty . . . and by reason that very many Workmen imployed in rebuilding this Citty if not admitted to the freedome upon moderate termes would notwithstanding enjoy the full benefitt thereof by vertue of the Act of Parliamt . . . without being at all subject to the charge thereof'. Nevertheless the policy could not be discontinued. To fill the houses<sup>2</sup> and the chamber, those who had been employed in the rebuilding, those who had taken new houses, and those who were 'otherwise fitly qualified' must be admitted as before.<sup>3</sup> The fees were to be stiffened where possible, but the entry could not be reduced.<sup>4</sup>

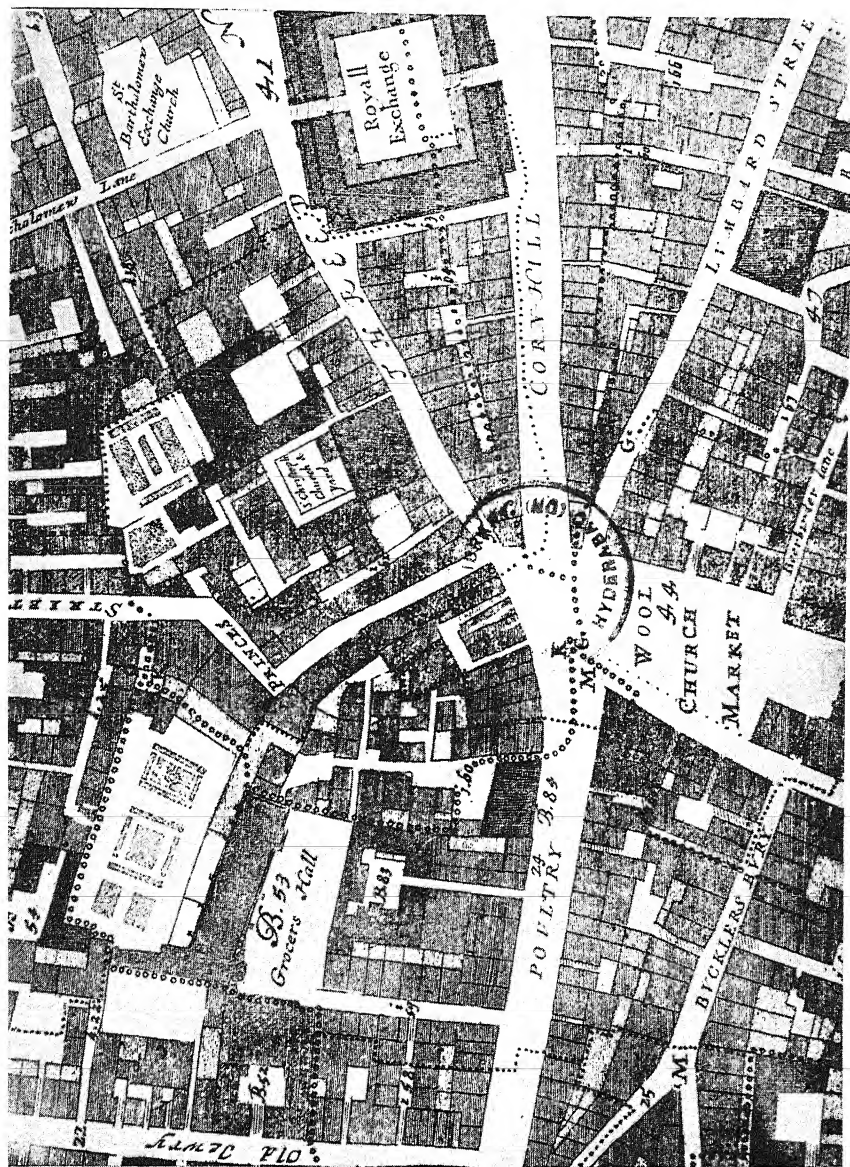
The Aldermen were right. The entry could not be reduced. But, if right in this, they were blind to fundamentals. The state they were seeking to maintain was the state of a hundred and fifty years earlier. Then fields had encircled the Walls and citizenship had been the only door to the privileges within. As the houses spread out beyond the Liberties, the City's control

<sup>1</sup> Receipts from admission to the freedom, apart from those granted to officers, were (Michaelmas to Michaelmas), 1667, £513 2s. od.; 1668, £885 8s. 10d.; 1669, £1059 15s. 4d.; 1670, £1510 18s. 4d.; 1671, £2572 18s. od.; 1672, £1636 8s. od.; 1673, £1160 16s. 8d.; 1674, £2274 8s. 8d.; 1675, £1797 4s. 4d.; 1676, £1460 4s. 10d. In 1679 they dropped below the thousand mark, and their average for the next fifteen years remained well below it.

<sup>2</sup> The 'view' of the Bridge property carried out in 1676, showed a satisfactory state of affairs in all places except Paternoster Row and Old Change. In the latter four houses were unbuilt, and four more unlet. In the former, out of twenty-two, ten were unlet.

<sup>3</sup> See also Philanthropus Philagathus, 'An humble remonstrance . . .' (1675).

<sup>4</sup> *Reperit.*, 80, f. 301.



The modern 'Bank Corner' as rebuilt after the Fire

From Ogilby and Morgan's map of London, published in 1677. The figures refer to the key published with it, and not to the width of the streets. Ward boundaries are shown by ooooo, those of the parishes by .....

had weakened. Submerged in greater London, it was folly to seek to maintain the exclusive rights of earlier days. That folly the City indulged. In the 1670s, blind to the course of events, it was still using its substance to prosecute builders of new houses beyond its boundaries<sup>1</sup> and to contest the grant of markets to serve them.<sup>2</sup> The new areas, having come into existence in defiance of charters and statutes, could not at that stage be defeated by them. True, individual successes were gained. London Bridge and the watermen proved too strong for the badly needed bridge at Westminster. Builders were convicted and fined. But Hydra, filled with life, could not be killed with musty parchments, however incontestable, or lawyers' tongues, however shrewd. The City was wasting on repression the money and the energies it should have used to devise a settlement with the children who, disowned, became its rivals.

Its regulation of commerce had the same moral. Channels instituted to control the shallow waters of earlier centuries were an irksome restriction to stronger currents. By the 1670s the Outroper had become an anachronism, the public 'Beams' a nuisance, and the water bailage so troublesome that it had been fought and overthrown. 'The contentious Practice of divers unfree Merchants'<sup>3</sup> of which it complained, was not inspired by malice. Unfree because the freedom was 'of little worth', they contended against the regulations which were helping to make it so. By vainly defending such self-imposed fetters, the City wasted its opportunities and added to its burdens. In such circumstances it was no wonder that houses remained empty and repeopling flagged. The time for the reforms urged by the Council under Charles I had long been overdue. The general admission to citizenship did something to help, but a

<sup>1</sup> In *inter alia*, Southwark, Whitechapel, Mile End and Spitalfields: (*Repert.*, 78, f. 126v; *Ibid.*, 79, f. 294). It was also taking steps to prevent the conversion of great houses into tenements, and asking the King to put a stop to all new buildings in the suburbs: (*Repert.*, 80, f. 120).

<sup>2</sup> For examples, see *Repert.*, 81, f. 298 (Stepney); *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1678, p. 233 (Brook House, Holborn).

<sup>3</sup> *Commons' Journals*, x, p. 797.

grudging concession could not take the place of a constructive reform.

Another concession in 1681, the grant of exemption from office,<sup>1</sup> as recommended by the grievances committee, showed the depth of the city's humiliation, but could not lift her from it. Medieval London, in its dotage, had to die before modern London could emerge. Two years later the end came. The Court of King's Bench pronounced 'that the franchises of the City of London should be seized into the King's hands'. In the same year the City was forced to declare a moratorium. Indignation over Charles's action has obscured the deeper issue. His attack was a move in his relations with Parliament, affecting the politics of the city's representatives, not the municipal policy of its government. The latter continued, unchanged alike by the surrender of 1683 and the restoration of 1689. The moratorium revealed a deeper weakness. The outcome of the cumulative deficits of sixty years, it was the last sign of the failure of the old City. The government of the richest town in England, perhaps the third richest town in Europe, had had to confess that it was unable to repay the money it held on trust for the orphans of its own citizens. The Fire which had modernized its buildings had not been able to modernize its policy. Morally bankrupt, like the Ancien Régime in France its position was revealed by the downfall of its finances. More fortunate than the Ancien Régime, it was allowed to live on. But from henceforward the private wealth which had carried London in triumph through its ordeal by fire was to become more and more the source and expression of its greatness. To-day 'The City' of this book is the government of a fraction of the great area we call London. The wealth which still finds its headquarters within the old Walls has taken its name and is known and respected all over the world.

<sup>1</sup> *For.*, 49, f. 208v.



## APPENDICES



## THE 'REJECTION' OF WREN'S PLAN

"UNHAPPILY defeated by faction" — for generations this has been the accepted epitaph for the London planned by Wren. His great scheme<sup>1</sup> was laid before the King and before Parliament, so the story runs, and accepted by both, only to be defeated by the narrow selfishness of the citizens.<sup>2</sup> Its 'Practicability . . . without Loss to any Man, or Infringement of any Property, was . . . demonstrated, and all material Objections fully weigh'd and answered'. Yet nothing was effected because of 'the obstinate Averseness of a great Part of the Citizens to alter their old Properties, and to recede from building their houses again on their old Ground & Foundations; as also the distrust in many, & Unwillingness to give up their Properties, tho' for a Time only, into the Hands of publick Trustees, or Commissioners, till they might be dispens'd to them again, with more Advantage to themselves, than otherwise was possible to be effected'.<sup>3</sup> That in sum is the legend which appears with unflinching regularity whenever the rebuilding of London is discussed. Yet nobody knows where or when it began. Probably Ralph had something to do with it, for in 1734 he published a vigorous lament that the plan had not been adopted.<sup>4</sup> 'But he accused nobody of selfish obstruction. That came fifteen years later. Gwynn then reproduced a version of Wren's plan in which he roundly attributed its nonfulfilment to faction and irresolution. The "Parentalia" followed in 1750, and with it the whole story of practicability and defeat.'<sup>5</sup> From that date it has reigned supreme.

The whole story is a dangerous distortion of the truth. Though King, Parliament and City all wanted a new ground plan, there is no trace among the records of the Lords, the Commons, the Privy Council, or the City, of the adoption of Wren's scheme. Gwynn's statement that it was 'approv'd of by . . . Parliament'<sup>6</sup> is a lie. Like others it was considered. Like others it was rejected. The City's own surveyor submitted a scheme.

<sup>1</sup> This is not the place to consider the merits of the scheme. Prepared in frantic haste (B.M., Add. MS. 6193, p. 164), on a faulty ground plan, it would certainly have been altered in many respects. Architects have given it unstinted praise, and at that it may be left.

<sup>2</sup> T. F. Reddaway, 'The Rebuilding of London after the Fire' (a) Wren's Plan', in *The Town Planning Review*, xvii (Liverpool, 1937), p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Wren, op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>4</sup> J. Ralph, *A critical review of the publick buildings . . . in, and about London and Westminster* (1734).

<sup>5</sup> *The Town Planning Review*, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>6</sup> Part of the title of Gwynn's plan.



## APPENDICES

The City itself approved that of Hooke. Parliament, though divided on the subject, refused to adopt any of them. The difficulties were too great. Finally the whole matter seems to have been relegated to the royal commissioners and the City surveyors. Wren himself was one of them, and two of his colleagues, Hooke and Mills, had also drawn up plans for a new city. The other three, Pratt, May and Jerman, were architects of the highest standing. No more sympathetic body could have been found, but, after a month's hard work, the adoption of a different policy showed that the idea had been abandoned. This whole book, whatever its failings, must surely point the moral that it had been impossible from the outset. Divorced from circumstances, a new plan may seem simple, Wren's magnificent: to contemporaries anxious examination showed that both were Utopian.

Why then did the legend arise? Proof cannot be given, strong probability can. Both the authors were interested parties. 'The "Parentalia"' was the work of Wren's son, edited by his grandson. It is eulogistic throughout, and the plan offered ample opportunity for a discursus in that strain. Eighty years had elapsed since the Fire; London had continued to grow; the old improvements had long been forgotten, and the existing defects were obvious to everybody. Wider streets offered a solution for many of them, and Wren could be made to appear as a prophet defeated by unenlightened self-interest. Gwynn was interested in the planning of streets and deliberately aiming at the creation of such an interest in the development of London. He therefore had every reason to desire that opponents of such schemes should be discredited. Having quite unashamedly falsified the streets in parts of his reproduction of Wren's design, he may equally well have applied his invention to the production of a letterpress which would further his aims.<sup>1</sup> Search amongst the records of contemporaries of the plan yields nothing in support of these two men. The plan was widely known. If it had in truth been weighed, argued and approved by Charles and his Parliament, its rejection by the citizens could not have passed unnoticed. 'Yet in all the disputes and controversies which accompanied the rebuilding, and the legislation which governed it, there is no record of anyone using it to point an argument or to barb a criticism. Nor do any of the contemporary diarists or letter-writers deplore its rejection'.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, Milward soberly notes that the Commons would not accept it. Wren's editor and Gwynn founded a legend opposed to every known fact. Helped by the greatness which came to Wren after 1666 their falsehoods have ousted the truth.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Town Planning Review*, op. cit., pp. 206-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> For the falsity of the *Parentalia's* assertion that Wren was appointed principal architect for rebuilding the whole city, see p. 55, note 2.

# APPENDIX B PAYMENTS OUT OF THE COAL DUES<sup>1</sup>

Year to Michaelmas	FROM THE CITY'S ACCOUNT		THE PARISH CHURCHES		ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL	
	All, excluding Interest	Interest	Balance	By Commissioners' Orders	Balance	By Commissioners' Orders
	£	£	£	£	£	£
1667	Nil	Nil	800			
1668	3,068	"	8,432			
1669	13,645	"	5,927			
1670	18,440	"	7,572			
1671	24,773	"	841			
1672	62,768	"	— 48,750			
1673	79,390	950	— 116,944			
1674	43,219	2,867	— 144,717			
1675	20,908	4,662	— 152,480			
1676	11,842	4,752	— 151,445			
1677	8,089	3,922	— 144,389			
1678	12,197	6,792	— 141,587			
1679	3,160	3,145	— 112,080			
1680	1,495	2,373	— 93,454			
1681	2,065	2,123	— 93,454			
1682	3,007	1,805	— 77,524			
1683	1,780	1,087	— 56,298			
1684	1,534	1,428	— 34,913			
1685	2,114	10,000	— 23,776			
1686	1,697	11,650	— 15,483			
1687	5,358	1,322	193			
Winding up	320	Nil	3,100			
Total	£320,871 10 3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	£58,878 2 7	£265,467 3 0	£265,467 3 0	£88,302 11 9 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	

<sup>1</sup> To the nearest pound. The actual balance transferred to the City's Cash was £3098 12s. 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d. The City collected and received the whole of the duties, sums being paid out to the churches and to St. Paul's on the order of the commissioners appointed for them by the second Act. Because a sum was transferred by the City on their order it does not necessarily follow that it was spent at once, although in most cases it would be. From 1678 onwards, these two columns also include the amounts debited to the respective funds for their share of the costs of collection. The Chamberlain gave certificates in 1674 and 1675 showing the amounts standing to the credit of St. Paul's on the coal dues and also on the account for voluntary gifts, probably in order that the authorities might know whether there was sufficient to allow rebuilding to begin. I am uncertain when the balance of £186 9s. 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d. was transferred to the cathedral. The effects of the City's raid in 1672 and the years following are strikingly apparent in the figures of the expenditure on its account.

# APPENDIX C LOANS<sup>1</sup> CONTRACTED ON AND REPAID OUT OF THE CITY'S SHARE OF THE COAL DUES<sup>2</sup>

Year to Michaelmas	FROM THE CHAMBER			FROM PRIVATE PERSONS		
	Borrowed	Repaid	Total outstanding at 6 % simple	Borrowed	Repaid	Total outstanding at 6% simple
	£	£	£	£	£	£
1667	900		900			
1668	9,960		10,860			
1669	9,950		20,810			
1670	13,350		34,160			
1671	12,850	4,000	43,010			
1672	13,620 <sup>3</sup>	2,000	54,630	21,520	600	20,920
1673	8,650	2,000	61,280	47,025	7,630	60,315
1674	15,500		76,780	4,600	7,200	57,715
1675	15,000		91,780	13,120	10,755	60,080
1676			do	8,700	6,840	61,940
1677			do	500	5,700	56,740
1678		4,050	87,730	7,000	3,170	60,570
1679		4,200	83,530		14,205	46,365
1680			do		8,535	37,830
1681		15,060	68,470		9,140	28,690
1682		6,900	61,570		8,820	19,870
1683		17,810	43,760		4,670	15,200
1684		2,000	41,760		15,200	Nil
1685		11,760	30,000			
1686		4,000	26,000			
1687		26,000	Nil			
			Total £25,774 18 4			Total £33,103 4 3

<sup>1</sup> The loans on the dues were secured after the familiar model of those made on the proceeds of royal taxes. They were to be repaid 'out of the monies arising in course as they [the City] shall hereafter receive the same': (*Guildhall Recs.*, Deeds, 2). Some lenders seem to have been content to allow their money to remain for many years, others took swift repayment. In May 1683, when the City wished to extinguish the loans as soon as possible, it ordered that they should be repaid in chronological order: (*Report.*, 88, f. 139).

<sup>2</sup> To the nearest pound.  
<sup>3</sup> Up to this year the Chamber had met the cost of the public buildings. At midsummer 1672 they were charged to and inserted in the Coal Account. For some years after that, there appears to have been an uncertainty as to what could be paid from the duties, but from 1675 the totals of the debt to the City as given in the Coal Account and in the City Cash, tally.

The amounts apportioned to each of these three years may not be quite accurate as the interest figures were totalled monthly and then made up to midsummer in each year. The discrepancy cannot, however, be great, and the sum of the three years is accurate.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOURCES

To keep this bibliography within reasonable limits it has been confined to the classes of manuscripts most freely used. Other manuscripts are shown in the footnotes. With few exceptions printed books have been excluded. No slight is thereby intended. When such books have been of assistance acknowledgement has been made in the relevant footnotes.

### (A) PUBLIC RECORDS

#### AT THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE:

Accounts of the Coal Dues submitted annually by the City to the  
Exchequer, 1668-87  
The Port Books for London, 1667-70  
Registers of the Privy Council  
State Papers Domestic

#### AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM:

The Decrees of the Fire Court, Add. MSS. 5063-5103, and 14331  
(index)  
Mercurius Politicus Redivivus, Add. MSS. 10116-10117

### (B) BELONGING TO THE CORPORATION OF LONDON

#### IN THE RECORDS DEPARTMENT:

Repertories (i.e. proceedings) of the Court of Aldermen, especially  
volumes 71-81  
Journals (i.e. Acts and proceedings) of the Court of Common Council,  
especially volumes 46-7

There are modern indexes to both the above, but they must be used with  
some care. Items which begin by appearing under one heading occasionally  
stray into others.

Bridge House Committee — Minute Book, 1 volume, 1667-82  
Papers, 1664-82

Miscellaneous city deeds, including leases and contracts, indexed  
under names and places

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Decrees of the Fire Court, 9 volumes and a contemporary alphabetical index of cases

Freedoms, Recognizances of Redemptions, 1 volume 1666-78

The Accounts of the City of London as trustee under the will of Sir Thomas Gresham, volume for 1665-80

Hustings Rolls of Deeds and Wills

Paving and Sewers, Accounts of moneys received and spent, 2 volumes, 1671-74

Sworn Viewers' Books, 3 volumes, 1667-91

These contain, in addition to the reports of the viewers, many report by the City Surveyors

### *The Chamber, and the City Debt:*

Chamberlain's Accounts (catalogued as Rental Ledger 16/61), 1 volume, 1662-87

The general accounts of the corporation (catalogued as City Cash Books), especially volumes 1/11 to 1/18

These are the engrossed accounts as submitted to the auditing committee. Each volume contains 3 or 4 years, but the resultant bulk is such that only one volume can be carried at a time

MS. 86, 5 and small MS. box 35, nos. 9 and 10 (various summaries of City expenditure)

Reports, by the Auditing Committees, dated 1668, 1674, 1677 and 1678

Loans contracted by the City,

Journals, 2 volumes, 1649-92

Ledgers, 2 volumes, 1648-83

MS. 99, 6, an account of money due to Orphans and other creditors on bond at Christmas, 1683

### *City Lands Committee:*

Journals, volumes i to iv, 1672-82

Orders, 3 volumes, 1667-78

Old Minutes, 1 volume, July 1668 to January 1673

Papers, especially for the years 1667-77

A mass of miscellaneous MSS. roughly sorted into years (old style) and boxed

### *Coal Dues:*

Miscellaneous papers relating to coals, beginning 1672

Thomas Nevile's accounts as collector, 1 volume for 1672

Account Books, 3 volumes, 1667-88

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Small MS. box 33, No. 29 (a summary of the payments out of the  
City's portion of the dues at June 9th, 1673)  
Loans on the security of the dues,  
    Posting Books, 2 volumes, 1670-84  
    Interest Acquittance Books, 2 volumes, 1672-84

### *Orphans:*

- Journals, especially the 3 volumes for 1662-88  
    Ledgers, the volumes for 1648-84  
    Overplus Finding Book, 1 volume, 1656-77

### IN THE CONTROLLER'S OFFICE

#### *Bridge House Records:*

- The Bridgemasters' Accounts, especially volumes 21-8, 1661-86  
    Bridgemasters' Weekly Payments (mainly for materials, repairs,  
        buildings and wages), 3rd series, volumes 11 to 12, 1661-77  
    Deeds, including leases  
    The Bridge House Committee:  
        Journal, volumes i to iii, 1622-94  
        Orders, 1 volume, 1611-1741  
        View Book, 1 volume, 1675-83

#### *City Records:*

- Rentals, volumes i to ii, 1667-78  
    City Lands Committee, Grant Books, volumes iv to vi, 1667-86  
    Letters Patent dated December 4th, 1671, with plan annexed. (The  
        grant in respect of the 'waterline')

### IN THE GUILDHALL LIBRARY

#### Manuscripts numbered:

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 94                      | A volume containing, <i>inter alia</i> ,<br>Londinum Redivivum, by John Evelyn<br>The Comptroller's book of Counsel's<br>Opinions 1677-93   |
| 289 }<br>290 }<br>361 } | Accounts of the moneys received and spent by the City<br>for celebrating the coronation of Charles II, pre-<br>sented £12,000 to Charles and his brothers, and<br>building the Loyal London |
| 273                     | Accounts of the 1s. duty on coals granted by 18 & 19<br>Charles II, c. 8, from its inception until Midsummer<br>1672  |

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## *Public Buildings and Works:*

- 184 Partial accounts of moneys spent by the City on various public buildings and works after the Fire
- 324 } Orders by the Court of Aldermen dated December 8th,
- 325 } 1669, for the rebuilding of Ludgate prison and the
- 326 } two Compters, with the names and powers of the committee managing each
- 327 Order of the Court of Aldermen dated December 16th, 1670, for paving high streets and payment therefor out of the Coal Dues
- 310-8 An agreement concerning the new King Street
- 306-20 Various manuscripts about the rebuilding of the churches

## *Relief Moneys given for Sufferers from the Fire:*

- 271 Day book of receipts and payments
- 274 A posting book, under counties, of the receipts
- 296 A summary of MS. 274
- 297 } Orders to the Chamberlain to make payments out of the
- 298 } relief moneys

## *Surveyors and Foundations:*

- 84 Four folio volumes, and an index, containing copies of papers in which Peter Mills and John Oliver recorded work done by them in the course of their work as City Surveyors
- 275 } Day books of the payments received for the compulsory
- 276 } setting out of foundations prior to rebuilding
- 277 }
- 278 A posting book, under streets, of MSS. 275-7
- 322 Orders for various payments for staking out the streets and setting out foundations
- 360 Payments for the Fire Court, mainly charged on the foundation moneys

RARE PRINTED BOOKS, PROCLAMATIONS AND OTHER  
BROADSIDES IN THE GUILDHALL LIBRARY

## PRINTED BOOKS:

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A report of the Common Council (n.d.)



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*Short Instructions for the executors and administrators of freemen* . . . [concerning] orphans portions, etc. . . . published by order of the Court of Aldermen (1682)

### PROCLAMATIONS:<sup>1</sup>

1666 September 5th, by the King; the city to be supplied and its refugees to be allowed to trade freely in other towns. Steele, 3472; Broad-sides 13, 34

September 6th, by the King; for markets to supply the city with provisions. Steele, 3473; Broad-sides 13, 33

September 13th, by the King; for a general fast and a collection for the 'burnt' Londoners. Steele, 3474

September 19th, by the King; for restoration of goods embezzled during and after the Fire. Steele, 3475

October 10th, by the Lord Mayor; for clearing foundations to make a survey. Steele, 3477; Broad-sides 13, 85

1667 March 21st, by the Lord Mayor; the act of Common Council specifying the high streets and the streets of note. Steele, 3488

April 29th, by the Lord Mayor; the act of Common Council for enlarging the streets. Steele, 3491; Broad-sides 6, 140

May 8th, by the King in Council; confirming the City's orders concerning rebuilding. Steele, 3492; Broad-sides 13, 86

1668 September 26th, by the King; for enforcing the collection proclaimed on September 13th, 1666. Steele, 3519

1671 April 7th, by the King; against the erection of new buildings in the suburbs without royal licence. Steele, 3549

1672 May 3rd and 15th, by the King in Council; concerning convoys for the colliers supplying London. Steele, 3567 and 3568.

### OTHER BROADSIDES:

23, 104 Valentine Knight's proposals for rebuilding the city

12, 91 Directions of the Commissioners of Sewers and Pavements for pitching and levelling the streets, July 8th, 1667

<sup>1</sup> The Guildhall press-mark is either by date or by Broadside. This section supplements R. Steele, *Bibliography of Tudor and Stuart Proclamations*, 1 (Oxford, 1910), where it is now out of date.

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St. Margaret Pattens, Rood Lane  
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